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LETTERS

TO A

DISSENTING MINISTER,

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL.

INDEPENDENT DENOMINATION,

CONTAINING

REMARKS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THAT SECT,

AND

THE AUTHOR'S REASONS FOR LEAVING IT,

AND CONFORMING TO THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

—
BY THE REV. M. A. GATHERCOLE.
—

“Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo.”—ST. AUG.

“To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”—ISAIAH viii. 20.

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PREFACE.

Previously to the commencement of the following pages, the Author received repeated solicitations to publish his reasons for leaving the Dissenters and conforming to the Established Church, not only from several of his old friends, but also from some highly respectable and worthy Churchmen, who urged it upon him as an imperative duty. To such requests, seconded by the circumstances and events of the times, he at length acceded, but with no small degree of reluctance and diffidence: not that he entertained the slightest doubt of the truth and rectitude of the opinions he has advocated, or of the falsehood and pernicious tendency of the principles and sentiments he has opposed; but simply because he was afraid, lest the Holy Cause which he felt most anxious to serve should suffer through his incompetency and inexperience as a writer; and because there were numbers who, to say nothing of their being much more interested, were, in point of talent, learning, and leisure, incomparably better able than himself to defend the Church and oppose her enemies. Having daily business to attend to, besides other necessary engagements, he was aware that his labours in the work of composition, would unavoidably meet with numerous interruptions. But, notwithstanding such discouragements, he commenced the task, and, considering all things, has executed it as well as he was able. Had he had more time, and been at liberty to have devoted

his sole and undivided attention to the work, it would, he feels persuaded, have contained fewer defects and imperfections; and, as to method and arrangement, have appeared in a different state. Such as it is, however, he presents it to the Christian Public for their serious thought and consideration, humbly trusting, that it will in some degree answer his intention of serving the cause of Christ and his Church. If any one should think, that it will not accomplish the object intended, as well as it might have done, the course is clear, let him *act* accordingly; if the writer of this shall have the happiness to know, that he has only been the means, even through his own inability, of provoking to the contest a nobler champion in defence of Truth, he will be abundantly satisfied.

With regard to language, the Author conceives that it may be whetted as the fool sharpened his knife; and as some are desirous of reforming the Church, until it has neither strength nor utility left, he has, therefore, *studiously* avoided everything in the shape of that capricious refinement—that spruce and affected delicacy which too often pleases the ear without benefitting the understanding; and has *laboured* to be plain, with a view of being more generally understood, particularly by Dissenters, the majority of whom are not only extremely illiterate, but actually consider it commendable to be so. If, at the same time, he should be thought to have unnecessarily failed in points of courtesy, it is purely unintentional, and must be attributed to his Dissenting education, of the effects of which he fears his utmost endeavours have not yet entirely succeeded to divest his mode of expression. He candidly confesses, however, that he has given no quarter to the *arguments* of his enemies, and that he never intended to do so; for, as Bishop Burnett

has well remarked, "Whatever moderation or charity we owe to men's persons, we owe none at all to their errors, and to that frame which is built on and supported by them." Thoroughly convinced of the wicked nature and evil tendency of the principles of Dissent, and the shameless dishonesty generally manifested in their defence, the writer has endeavoured to expose and treat them accordingly; and happy would he have felt, could he have discovered a method by which those false principles, and the equally false reasoning which is built upon them, might have been successfully opposed, without at all involving the persons of those who espouse, or pretend to espouse them. The slightest knowledge of human nature, however, clearly evinces that this is absolutely impossible; had it been otherwise, the inhabitants of the old world would not have been destroyed—their errors and vices would alone have suffered. The conduct, also, of our Lord himself on various occasions, particularly as recorded in the Twenty-third Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, demonstrates that persons and their errors are indissolubly connected. Concerning those who depraved Christianity in the primitive ages, the Apostle says, "The *man* that is a heretic reject," not the heresy only, which would have been impossible, but the *man*. Rebuke them sharply *αποτόμῳ* cuttingly. And had John the Baptist rebuked adultery without rebuking the adulterous Herod, he would not have lost his head. Those who attempt to combat errors abstractedly and independently of the persons who hold them, resemble the army of Mithridates, which lost the day by mistakingly aiming their arrows, not at the *persons*, but at the *shadows* of the Roman soldiers.

Were Dissenting Teachers (for they are the persons *particularly* alluded to in the following Work) really a quiet,

peaceable, and praying people, as they pretend to be, they would deserve the utmost pity and compassion; but when it is evident to the world that the religion of most of them is merely a cloak, which they would fain throw over their wily, unprincipled, and selfish agitation and turbulence, and from under which they malignantly spurt the venom of that incurable envy, hatred, and malice which they entertain towards the Church and State of this country, to treat them as persons sensibly alive to all the charms of unmixed politeness, condescending generosity, and conciliating benevolence, would be utterly in vain; it would, indeed, be like hewing millstones with a feather. Nor does genuine charity demand that they should be thus treated. It is a command, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men:" and "Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints" is also a command no less imperative and binding. Peace, invaluable though it be, is always too dearly bought when purchased at the sacrifice of truth; and that spurious charity and trimming expediency which demand such an immolation, cannot be too highly detested. Timidity is widely different from meekness, and has no place in the list of the Christian Graces: there is a false meekness as well as a false charity. Courage, boldness, and heroic firmness are noble characteristics of the Christian Soldier, and their exercise was never more requisite than at the present moment. The Christian Minister, in particular, is now called upon to stand forward manfully and undauntedly in defence of the Church of Christ, in opposition to the furious assaults of her inveterate enemies.* And, how-

* Mr. T. Binney, a Dissenting Teacher, in the appendix to an address lately delivered and published by him, has the following:—"It is with me, I confess, a matter of *deep serious religious* conviction that the

ever sharply Dissenters may be treated in the contest, they cannot complain; they are the aggressors, and have only themselves to thank for the very little ceremony to which they are entitled.

The Author deliberated some time upon the propriety of subscribing his name broadly to the following letters, and once concluded to do so. But on more mature reflection, he was induced to adopt a different course; not that he is at all ashamed of his name, or afraid of being called upon for his vouchers for the facts he has stated, but *simply* and *solely* because, connected with some of those facts, and involved in them, are individuals who would, (at least, where the facts took place,) be inevitably known through the medium of his own name. Regard, therefore, to the feelings of those individuals who would thus have been partially pointed out to the public, has alone influenced him to publish his Work anonymously. And he cannot conceive that the least inconvenience or disadvantage can possibly arise from such a mode of procedure. The arguments advanced are not a whit the more or the less true without his name, than they would have been with it. And should any person wish to communicate with him on any of the matters brought forward in the publication, he may easily do so

Established Church is a GREAT NATIONAL EVIL—that it is an OBSTACLE TO THE PROGRESS OF TRUTH AND GODLINESS IN THE LAND—that IT DESTROYS MORE SOULS THAN IT SAVES, and that, *therefore, its end is most devoutly to be wished by every lover of God and man.*" This is speaking out, and needs no comment, provided it be understood that by "truth and godliness" he means "Dissent," for to that, of course, the Established Church is "*an obstacle*" and ever will be whilst she holds the truth; and hence the outcry of all the Dissenting, Radical, and Atheistical rabble of the country, who are well aware that, but for the Established Church, they would have some chance of revelling in their licentiousness, and of wallowing in their filth.

through the medium of the publisher ; any such communication will receive immediate and becoming attention. But in case the Author should be taunted by Dissenters with concealing his name from any other and less worthy motives, than those stated, he reserves to himself the privilege of openly and distinctly avowing it in a subsequent edition, should his work be so highly honoured. Dissent alone would suffer by such a step ; but that would not cause him one moment's hesitation, should he feel himself called upon to take it. He knows his enemies, and is not altogether ignorant of their craft and devices. He is aware, that whoever opposes their " interest " puts his hand into a nest of hornets, and had need to be well guarded with both truth and innocence to escape the venom of their malignant stings. He did not commence his labours in what he conceives to be the noblest and best cause in the world, without calculating the cost, and considering the consequences. He believes *conscientiously*, that he is engaged on the side of righteousness and truth, in opposition to wickedness and falsehood of the most dangerous description. He views Dissent as a sort of outlet from the fertilizing river of Christianity into the Dead Sea of Infidelity ; and he sincerely regrets that his opinion is so strongly corroborated by positive matter of fact, both in this country and on the continent. He, therefore, feels it to be the duty of every real Christian to oppose it with all his might, fearless of the consequences, and sure of the blessing of Heaven.

He desires here to acknowledge, with feelings of gratitude, the obligation he lies under to those of whose labours he has in any degree availed himself. To the Review of Mr. James's Church Member's Guide, by the Rev. Mr. Cawood, he is deeply indebted ; he knows not a more useful

little work for extensive circulation, particularly amongst that sect of Dissenters for whom it was principally intended. He has evidence of its having done great good in rescuing some from the fangs of Dissent, and restoring them to the unity of the Christian Church. "Ashe's Ecclesiastical Catechism"—"The Church of England Defended from the Attacks of Modern Dissenters"—"The Authority of a Threefold Ministry"—"A Serious Address to Seceders and Sectarists"—"A Treatise on the Nature and Constitution of the Christian Church"—"A Church Establishment Lawful, Scriptural, and Necessary"—"Claims of the Established Church, &c." are all very cheap and useful little Tracts for wide circulation, either gratuitously or otherwise. The last five are published by the venerable and excellent Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and all the eight are well calculated to stem the evils of heresy, schism, and Dissent. And to those who have more leisure for reading, may be recommended Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, a work beyond all praise; it has ever remained unanswered by Dissenters, and only because it is unanswerable.

To those friends of the Church who may honour the following sheets with a perusal, the Author humbly desires to intimate that he will most thankfully receive any hint that may have for its object the improvement of his Work, assuring them that should he have the pleasure of re-printing it, any suggestion of that nature shall have his best attention. He is (if a Christian may employ such a term) proud to say, that he loves his Church; being so intimately connected with his best, his eternal interests, no object on earth is so dear to his heart; and, therefore, it will ever be his greatest delight to attend to any thing which may tend to promote her safety and welfare. He considers her at

the present moment, *especially*, the rock of Christendom, the bulwark of Protestantism, and the glory of the Nation; and should the wishes and efforts of her enemies succeed in her destruction, it would be the very direst calamity that could possibly afflict the land. And, as it regards Christendom at large, where can a Church at present be found so Primitive and Apostolic in her form of Government—so Scriptural in her Doctrines, and so pure, chaste, and devotional in her formularies of Worship? Let every soul, then, who has any regard for real religion and unfeigned piety, and who feels any interest in the spiritual welfare of himself and his fellow-creatures, unite heart and hand, and determine upon her preservation. And let each one of her Clergy take up and prepare his arms and be firm as a rock in her defence, playing the man, the minister of Christ. Her stability, under the blessing of Almighty God, entirely—solely and entirely—depends upon her Clergy. If they *continue* to observe the “*never-mind system*,” and to be careless, supine, and inactive, and to trust to any but themselves, all is at an end. But if they will arise, shake off their lethargy, and exert themselves courageously and determinately, the Church is as secure as the everlasting hills, and may bid defiance to all the malicious and wicked attempts of her enemies. The number of those Dissenting Teachers who are so violently bent upon her destruction, does not at the very utmost amount to three thousand, whereas the number of the Clergy cannot be less than sixteen thousand; and as to the real weight of each number in the country, there is no comparison at all—for whilst the former are illiterate, upstart, envious, and proud, and engaged in an infernal alliance and warfare with Papists, Arians, Socinians, Free-

thinkers, Deists, Infidels, and Atheists; the latter, as a body, possess talent, learning, ability, worth, and influence unequalled, and what is more than all, a righteous and holy cause. Let the Clergy, then, unite to them the Laity, and shew the people their real friends from their enemies, and tell them that *they* want them not to forward any ungodly designs and selfish ends of their's,—that *they* want them not to hire their pews, or subscribe their pence, to fill their own pockets and “serve their own belly;” and that in the Church “to the poor the Gospel is preached, without money and without price.” Let them unceasingly point out to the people the origin, nature, design and end of the Christian Church—the Scriptural and Apostolic form of her Government—obedience to their properly commissioned Teachers—the great danger of every description of heresy, schism, and Dissent—the “heady high-minded,” “self-willed,” “presumptuous,” and blasphemous conduct of interested schismatics—the great blessings of unity, peace, and concord in the Church, with the numerous Scriptures exhorting thereto, and above all the difference between authorized and unauthorized Ministers. If these things, instead of being seldom touched upon, were continually enforced upon the minds and *consciences* of the people, as subjects of great importance, as they really are, matters would wear a very different aspect, and the Church occupy a far more elevated position. God works by means for the accomplishment of his own gracious purposes; and let the Clergy but unite themselves together as the heart of one man, and rise like a giant refreshed with new wine, and try all their strength, energetically bringing all their talents, learning, weight, and influence to bear upon the security, preservation, and welfare of the Church, and

no power in the kingdom would be able to stand before them. Christianity—vital religion—real unaffected piety, might then occupy her proper station, and exert her benign and salutary influence over all classes of the people to the suppression of many of their vices, and through the grace and blessing of God, to the salvation of their souls. Let, then, the duly authorized and highly honoured servants of Christ, using all the means in their power, go forth in the strength of the Lord their God, and abundant success will attend their paths. For He whose words can never fail, has promised his Church—“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.” “The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet,” and “I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.” May the Lord in mercy fulfil these gracious promises to our National Zion, and ever “be unto her a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of her.”

Sheffield, April 29, 1834.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

That the Author of the following Letters would be called upon for a Second Edition of them within one month of the publication of the First was certainly what he did not in the remotest degree anticipate. Such, however, was the fact: and the gratitude which he feels to the public for such a favourable reception of his Work, may more easily be conceived than expressed. Heartily attached, from thorough conviction, to the Established Church of his country, as the only true branch of the Catholic Church in the land, his sole object in writing in her defence was, to render her some little service in the present crisis. And he rejoices to know that he has succeeded; for he has received the gratifying information that, in exposing the errors of Dissent, and shewing the scriptural foundation of the Church, his Work has, in numerous instances, been rendered essentially useful. The ends of his writing having been, therefore, in some degree answered, he is, consequently, himself comparatively satisfied. And his only hope and desire is, that his Work may be still further instrumental in serving the interests and promoting the welfare of our excellent Scriptural and Apostolic Church.

The Author conceives that an apology is due to the Public for the typographical errors, which he regrets to say, the First Edition contained. To his distance from the press,

and the desire of getting the Work out as speedily as possible, they are properly to be attributed. But of such inaccuracies, he flatters himself the present Edition will be found almost, if not entirely free. This, together with the few alterations and additions which have been made, will, it is hoped, render the work still more worthy of the kind reception of the Christian Public.

The Writer also wishes, in again committing his fragile bark to the troubled and stormy ocean of human opinion, to express his most sincere thanks to the able Editors of the British Magazine and the Christian Remembrancer, and to the Conductors of other Periodicals, for the kind and flattering manner in which they have noticed his Work. He also wishes to record his sense of obligation to those Dissenters—both Writers and others, who, instead of attempting either to disprove his facts, or to overturn his arguments, have only honoured him with personal abuse and slander. For all this he was fully prepared; and is only disappointed in their not having favoured him with a greater degree of reproach, calumny, and falsehood—their staple commodities. Such treatment from such persons will ever be to him no mean proof of the rectitude of his principles and practices; and it will ever be his utmost endeavour to escape the misfortune of being degraded by their praise. As to their threats of prosecution, *they* are quite in character, and come with excellent grace from those who are everlastingly bawling about liberty of conscience and liberal principles. Let them prosecute if they dare, and as soon as they please. The facts contained in the Work would thus receive even a stronger confirmation than they have already received, from the circumstance that many have not only “put the cap on,” but have, *very judiciously*,

walked abroad with it in the greatest rage, telling others (who would otherwise never have known) how well it fitted them. All that they have to do is, to answer the arguments and to disprove the facts stated in the Work; for till that is done, nothing is done that will satisfy the minds of sensible and thinking men.

If in perusing the following sheets any reader shall think that the Author has written with too great a degree of pungency, let him remember that it is often impossible to describe *truly* either the errors and wickedness of a system, or the falsehoods and iniquitous proceedings of its interested advocates, without some appearance of this. When such pernicious principles as those of Dissent, and such abominable practices as those of bigoted Dissenters are to be exposed and reprobated, it is absolutely necessary to speak either severely or falsely. The writer has, therefore, chosen to speak truly, and to call things by their right names, believing, as he does, that there is just as much real Christianity in hating and honestly reproving evil, as there is in loving and praising good. At other times, and under other circumstances, Dissenters would have received far different treatment; but when all the various and heterogeneous sects in the kingdom, under the vague and undefined term—Dissenters, and actuated by the Devil, are so insanely clamouring for the destruction of the venerable and beautiful fabric of the Church of England, it becomes, as a matter of necessity, the bounden duty of her true sons courageously to oppose them with a firm and unflinching hand. And whether on the head of severity Dissenters have any cause to complain or not, let the following specimens of their own sentiments and language towards the Church testify. One of them, in the plenitude of his liberality

and piety, writes of the Church of England, which he calls "*the crimson Whore of Canterbury*," thus, "As there is hardly to be found a *serious* Dissenter in all Great Britain who does not in private (*in private!!!!*) confess that the Church of England is a *conspicuous apostacy*, and works great evil among the people; the deduction is evident, that it is a paramount duty to endeavour to destroy this evil." "*The whole frame of society is virtually corrupted by the Established Church*—an atmosphere of aristocratical pride through its influence has settled over all the land—an immense majority of all the parishes in England are, in consequence, consigned to the Ministry of *godless and careless Priests, who pervert the Gospel, and teach nothing good either by precept or example.*" "Who can foretell all the benefits pressing for the nations of the earth when the great Juggernaut of England shall be beaten to pieces?" "If it is our duty to destroy the works of the Devil, *here is a master-work of his contrivance close at hand.*"* At a Meeting of Dissenters, held at Cottingham, one of them delivered himself as follows:—"The Church of England is *the* synagogue of Satan, and so far anti-scriptural and anti-christian, that it will one day or other be destroyed by the breath of God. The grossest corruption and bloodshed may be traced to the Establishment, which had been raised by the pride of man and not by Scripture. I also object (continues he) to the Church of England, because of the means used to support it—for in every ten years the entire produce of the land for a year is eaten up by the *black footed locusts*, and the parties who principally consume this revenue, are the bloated Archbishops and Bishops, the

* A Serious Address to Protestant Dissenters, by a Puritan; p.p. 26, 30, 31.

lazy Deans and Sub-Deans, and the useless Canons and Prebendaries. Again, it must be remembered that every doctrine and prayer of the Church is prescribed by the State, *and if the whole Clergy throughout the Kingdom were to be directed, on a certain Sunday, to fall down and worship an ass, they would be compelled to do it.*" This is moderate, but hear another of these pious and worthy Dissenting Orators. "*I wish to God that I had this evening to preach the Funeral Sermon of that hoary harlot Mother Church, which is a blast and nuisance upon the earth, both black, bloody, and useless; and I will say, blessed be those hands that shall first hurl her to dark perdition, among the fiends there to be honouring and to be honoured by the Devil.*"* After such precious morsels of the piety, charity, gentleness, good-will, and kindness of Dissenters towards the Church, and after all the "*keen hatred and round abuse*" and liberal proceedings of that "Triple Alliance" the "Three Denominations" united for the purpose of overturning the constitution of the country in Church and State, who will not say with our gracious King, in his heart-stirring speech to the Bishops—that it is "*necessary for those who feel their duty to that Church to speak out.*" After the above quotations what Dissenter can ever have the impudence to find fault with whatever severity is to be found in the following Letters?

Sheffield, August 16, 1834.

* Cambridge Chronicle, April, 1834.

PREFACE

TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

By referring to the Preface to the First Edition, the Reader will immediately discover that the Writer there stated his *reasons* for publishing his "Letters" anonymously, and that he also there intimated that, "in case he should be *taunted* by Dissenters with concealing his name from other motives than those there given, he would openly and distinctly avow it in a subsequent edition, should his Work be so highly honoured." His Work has been so honoured, and he has been thus *taunted*; and, therefore, his name will now be found upon the Title Page of this Edition. It would have appeared with the Third Edition, but the Author supposed that he had not sufficient time to give the necessary directions to his Bookseller. And what difference the knowledge of his name will now make to the *facts* and *arguments* contained in the Work, it is difficult to divine. And should any Dissenters feel themselves aggrieved in consequence of that knowledge, they have only to blame their own party for their injudicious and abusive taunts.

The Writer always intended, in case any thing in the shape of a reply should appear, to have noticed it in an after edition of his Book. But, to his disappointment, nothing of the kind has yet been produced that he knows of. He

has seen every notice that he has been able to see, but has only found that amidst all the torrents of abuse which have been poured upon him from every quarter, and with which he feels himself so highly honoured, his enemies have not *even attempted* to disprove a *single fact*, or to invalidate a *single argument*. They *assert* in just so many words that the Book throughout is nothing but falsehood; and sure enough a more easy way of getting over it cannot well be imagined. But with all men of common sense assertion and *proof*, like abuse and *argument*, are considered as wide as the poles asunder. Let the Dissenters take up the arguments singly and separately, and answer them if they can. If they do not, it will be concluded that they cannot.

The Author cannot suffer the present opportunity to pass without again expressing his heartfelt sense of gratitude for the flattering manner in which his Work has been received by the public, whose favour has allowed him the honour of presenting to their notice the Fourth Edition of it within so short a space of time. He would hope that it is a token for good to our spiritual Zion.

York, December, 1834.

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LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

SIR,

IN assuming the liberty of addressing you upon subjects of no less importance than those in dispute between the Church of England and that sect of Dissenters to which you belong, and of which you are a Minister, I might occupy your time with a host of apologies, but I think it quite unnecessary. Before, however, I enter more immediately on the consideration of the points which I intend to examine, and engage your attention to the arguments which appear to me to be so weighty, I will make a few remarks, and lay before you a few facts connected with the history of my own opinions. In the first place, then, I consider it expedient to intimate, that my parents were rigid Dissenters of the Congregational Independent Denomination, and that they brought me up strictly in the principles and sentiments of that sect; and that when I came to years of thought and to be free from parental guidance, not doubting the truth of those principles and sentiments, I adopted them as my own, and became and remained for some time a Member of a large and respectable Congregational Independent Church. Nor was I a cold, nominal Dissenter, but a zealous and warm-hearted—a conscientious and rigid one. I used every exertion in my power, in various ways, to promote the extension and welfare of the “Dissenting Interest,” which I then con-

sidered synonymous with the Redeemer's Kingdom. With regard to the Church of England, I was ever taught to believe, and like the generality of Dissenters, I really did believe it to be full of ceremony, superstition, and idolatry, and neither more nor less than a slightly modified system of Popery. I, therefore, hated it, and thought that no person could be spiritually safe in communion with it. I looked upon all Churchmen as mere formal professors of an adulterated system of Christianity. I considered them in the cant of Dissent as "men of the world," and entirely destitute of genuine religion; and I need not inform you, that in such a light they are charitably viewed by the majority of Dissenters, who thus, with great *humility* and equal modesty, arrogate to themselves exclusively the appellation of "the Saints"—"the People of God."

Some little time before I became a member of a Dissenting Church, "Palmer's Non-conformist's Catechism" was put into my hands by a bigotted Dissenter. I read it, and confess that it confirmed me, not only in my dissenting notions, but also in my hatred to the Church; so that I then became what is sagely termed a "Dissenter *on principle*." About two years after this, and shortly after I had united myself to a Dissenting Community, a book entitled "Christian Fellowship, or the Church Member's Guide," by Mr. James, a Dissenting Minister at Birmingham, was recommended to me as a most excellent work, and one which every Dissenter ought to possess. I immediately afterwards procured it, and gave it an attentive perusal. But, although my views respecting the Established Church were materially strengthened by the bitter invectives and calumnious falsehoods against the Church, which the author has foisted into his book, yet I confess that such was not the case with regard to my dissenting views; for the monstrous evils of Dissent which he has there pourtrayed, and not in the most tempting colours, are by no means calculated to strengthen even Dissenters themselves in their attach-

ment to the cause. And sure I am, that every pious and intelligent Churchman would rise from the perusal of that book with sentiments of the most unfeigned gratitude for the happiness of belonging to a truly scriptural and Apostolic Church, in which no such evils can ever occur. Previously to my reading it, I certainly had no idea that evils of such magnitude and frequent occurrence existed amongst Dissenters, whose purity and excellence I had always been accustomed to hear so highly extolled. But I had not been long a member of a Dissenting Church before I discovered the truth of Mr. James's remarks, for as I regularly attended all those which you call "Church Meetings," which none but Members are allowed to attend, I was soon a witness of such scenes of confusion and uproar as would scarcely have been tolerated in a decent public-house. I have seen a Dissenting Deacon, whom Mr. James terms* "*the Patron of the Living, the Bible of the Minister, and the wolf of the flock,*" unite with one or two others of the richer Members, and carry everything his own way, in opposition to almost all the Members besides; and the *dependent* Minister, knowing from whom the greater part of his salary proceeded, *obliged* to resort to the degrading expedient of "running with the hare and holding with the hounds." I have seen Members of the same Church actuated by such mutual enmity as to meet at the Meeting-house, and pass without even noticing each other. I also found that slanderous backbitings, and the most illiberal and uncharitable judgments and condemnations of each other, were by no means uncommon, and sometimes even sanctioned, if not encouraged, by the Ministers themselves.

After I had been some time a Member, I had occasion to remove to a considerable distance; and as it was a populous district, there were several Dissenting Meeting-houses in the neighbourhood. I attended

* See Mr. James's Church Member's Guide, p. 146. 2d Edition.

one of them, and entertained thoughts of obtaining my dismissal to it, from the one I had just left. But I soon gave these thoughts to the winds, for on becoming a little better acquainted with the Members and the state of matters amongst them, I found, that, notwithstanding all the boasting that Dissent is "already purified,"* this community was not quite so pure as they wished to be considered. The Minister was a stripling, just arrived from one of the Dissenting Academies, and being puffed up with the idea of his being a person of some consequence, he carried himself with a degree of pride and arrogance that was as little warranted by his attainments as it was consistent with his situation in life. This led to a fact which came to my knowledge with respect to his treatment of one of the best of the Members of his Church, and so disgusted me, that I immediately left his Meeting-house.† I then regularly attended another, and thought of making that a sort of spiritual home. But alas! alas! for Dissenting purity!—here also the Minister was a time-server, whose private life belied his pulpit discourses; the Clerk was a rogue; one of the Deacons more than suspected of being the same, and but very little of anything like real piety or uprightness existed among any of the Members;—I, consequently, could not unite with such a fraternity.‡ There was yet another Meeting-house within about three miles, but here also matters were quite as bad, if not worse.§

In short, I began to discover so much wickedness amongst Dissenters, not only in the Societies just alluded to, but amongst the majority of those of whom I knew any thing at all, and all slyly committed under the graceful garb of religion and piety, that I determined to attach myself to no Church just then, but to remain a Dissenter at large, and attend whatever Meeting-

* See Appendix No. I.

† See Appendix No. III.

‡ See Appendix No. II.

§ See Appendix No. IV.

house my fancy might lead me to. Thus I went on for a considerable time, generally attending the Meeting-house nearest home, and occasionally others ; but as to going to the Established Church, no such a thought ever once occurred to my mind. I was still a rigid, conscientious, and bigotted Dissenter ; and just as conscientious and bigotted an opponent of the Established Church, and had not the most distant idea imaginable of ever being at all otherwise.

But the good Providence of God so overrules the affairs of this world, that unforeseen consequences are not unfrequently produced from the most trivial circumstances. A Clergyman calling upon me one evening, on ordinary business, we entered into conversation, and at length got to arguing upon the merits and demerits of the Church and Dissent. I, of course, extolled the principles and practices of Dissent, and decried those of the Church ; and, feeling so thoroughly convinced, as I did, of the truth and excellency of my own sentiments, I opposed him very strenuously ; and, in the course of that opposition, I quoted, or rather *misquoted*, that passage of the Burial Service which is so generally misquoted and misrepresented by Dissenters. He contended that I had not quoted it correctly ; I insisted that I had. He then requested a Prayer Book to decide the matter ; but with feelings not very pleasant to myself, I was obliged to confess that we neither had one in the house, nor ever had. He very justly replied, that he thought I ought, in common justice, not only to have had one, but also to have well examined it, before I attempted to condemn it. I felt the force of his remark, and both ashamed and mortified at the thought of having subjected myself to the charge of dishonesty, in condemning the Prayer Book and the Church, without proper examination. However, he soon after wished me a good night, and I immediately began to reflect upon the subject, and to revolve it in my mind ; and on the following day I sent to the nearest market town, which

was almost four miles distant, for the express purpose of purchasing a Prayer Book; for I had come to the determination of giving the whole matter a full and fair examination. I looked upon religion as a matter of the most important concern, and as a *personal* affair. I, therefore, thought that it was for me to endeavour to get into the way that leadeth unto life eternal, let whosoever would or would not be walking therein; and that upon my embracing and holding right views of the Gospel of Christ in all its bearings, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, depended my spiritual happiness and comfort on earth, and my enjoyment of everlasting bliss in heaven.

With these views, I can truly say, I commenced, and endeavoured to conduct, the examination. Nevertheless, I could not divest myself of my prejudices in favour of Dissent, nor look upon the Established Church as anything but a "corrupt and rotten system." I did not expect to find in it the least thing of which I could approve. I fully anticipated, without the shadow of a doubt to the contrary, that the result of my examination would be, that I should be confirmed more strongly than ever in the "principles of Dissent," and in my ideas of the unscriptural nature of the Church. I, however, commenced, and considering the Articles as the foundation—the bones of the system—I began with giving *them* a careful examination. I passed on pretty smoothly, and found nothing to which I could materially object till I came to the twentieth; to that, and to some of those subsequent, I then felt decided objections, particularly to those implying Episcopacy; for I had ever been taught that *that* was wickedness itself, and nothing but a system of spiritual pomp and tyranny, derived by the Church of England from the idolatrous and apostate Church of Rome; I was, therefore, bitterly opposed to it.

Having finished the Articles, I commenced with "The Order for Morning Prayer," and read it attentively through, according to the Rubric, and was

much struck with the inimitable simplicity, richness, fervour, and chasteness of the prayers, but particularly of the Litany, which I even then, prejudiced as I was, thought the most truly devotional composition I had ever met with: and having heard the Athanasian Creed so frequently objected to, I paid *that* the most marked attention, expecting to find something in it of the most unscriptural nature; but having examined and re-examined it, I really felt surprised that any Trinitarian should be found to cavil at such an admirable and truly scriptural summary of the Christian Faith. With regard to what are called "the dam-natory clauses," the idea that struck me was, that I would freely have pronounced them in the face of the whole universe; for I considered them simply as an echo of "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."* I afterwards proceeded to the examination of the Prayers appointed for the Evening Service, the Collects, and the remaining parts of the Prayer-Book, and found them, upon the whole, very far different from what I expected to find them. I saw in the Liturgy something adapted to every shade of adversity or prosperity to which a Christian can possibly be exposed in his pilgrimage through the world. It contains petitions for every thing, couched in language and terms of humility becoming a sinful creature addressing his great Creator. Every thing in the shape of that familiarity, so common, so disgusting, and sometimes so truly shocking among Dissenters, is all throughout very carefully and wisely avoided. The ideas expressed, and the language used, are almost invariably drawn from that inexhaustible mine of richness and purity,—the Word of God. But, although I could not but consider the prayers in and of themselves as most devotionally excellent and beautiful, I could by no means reconcile my mind to the constant use of a pre-composed

* Mark xvi. 16.

set form of prayer; nor could I think it right that the Minister should be confined to the constant repetition of it, exclusively of all other. Nevertheless, I thought I would venture to go to Church for once, and hear the service read for myself, that I might be the better able to judge: but having scarcely ever been within a Church, I felt no small degree of reluctance at the thought of it. At length, however, on a Sunday morning I summoned up courage and went, and heard the Morning Service solemnly and devotionally read; and, upon the whole, liked it better than I had anticipated. But always habituated to the lazy worship of Dissenters, I thought the prayers long and tiresome. Still I thought this might perhaps be imputed to the state of my mind at the time, and to my having not been accustomed to them. With one circumstance, however, I was extremely well pleased, and that was, that so much of the Holy Scriptures were introduced in the course of the service, as much indeed as is read in some Dissenting Meeting-houses in three months. This I conceived to be, as it really is, a very great excellency: and altogether many prejudices which I had previously entertained towards the Established Church, had vanished. Yet my habits and prejudices being so very strong in favour of Dissent, I continued to go generally to the Meeting-house, and only occasionally to Church, and that very seldom. However I did then just begin to think that a person might be a Churchman, and yet a Christian. I also recollected that those glorious martyrs, who at the Reformation sealed their testimony with their blood, and who are so much praised even by Dissenters themselves, were strictly Churchmen. I consequently thought, that if they could belong to the Church, and obtain eternal salvation at last, as I could not doubt, and as Dissenters themselves would not deny that they did, why could not we do the same? How could our schism be justified? Besides, I considered them far more able, more learned, more enlightened, and certainly far more *disinterested* than

most of those who set up their judgments against them ; and that some degree of deference to their superior abilities, learning, judgment, and piety, could not be withheld without a great degree of self-conceit, presumption, and pride. In fact, I began to suspect that there *might be* guilt in our schism.

At the same time, I thought there were great evils in the Church of which I could not approve, independently of her Episcopal form of government ; on the other hand also, I knew that there were great evils amongst Dissenters. I saw, and had seen, a great deal of spiritual pride, hypocrisy, self-willedness, and wickedness amongst them ; and but very little real unvarnished godliness. I was acquainted with several of their Congregations, and with many instances of gross immorality both amongst Ministers and Members. I saw a great deal of towering profession, and heard a great deal of religious talk* amongst them ; but I also saw that all this was very often flatly contradicted by their more private conduct. To those but superficially acquainted with them, and who have never been wound up, as it were, with them, they undoubtedly appear very pious people ; and if great profession and great talking constitute sterling godliness, they certainly are the most pious people on the face of the whole earth.

But although I had seen so much hypocrisy and wickedness, yet I still believed the *system* of Congregational Independency to be in perfect harmony with the Scriptures, and therefore could not abandon it. I believed the system to be right, though I knew the conduct of the people in general, and particularly the conduct of some of the Ministers, whom I discovered to be little else than mere political demagogues, to be any thing but what their great pretensions would lead one to suppose.

After some little time had transpired, during which I remained nearly in *statu quo*, I almost accidentally

* See Appendix No. V.

met with the "Review of Mr. James's Church Member's Guide," published in a small pamphlet entitled "The Church of England and Dissent," and on perusing it, such a flood of light poured into my mind upon the subjects of Congregational Independency and Episcopacy, that I was completely staggered. I saw the truth, and felt the force of the Author's remarks, and yet was unwilling to believe them. The sentiments I had so long held—with which I had become so familiar, and the truth of which I had never for a moment doubted, seemed so firmly rivetted to my very nature, that I felt as though I could not give them up. But being determined to be guided by truth, and not to be afraid of discovering the falsehood of my own opinions, I gave the pamphlet *another* perusal, weighing every argument as carefully and as impartially as my pre-conceived notions and prejudices would allow me. I then resolved to examine the New Testament in reference to these subjects; I, therefore, read over the Acts of the Apostles and all the Epistles. To the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus I gave particular attention; I read them, and read them, and read them again, and was astonished that my pre-conceived sentiments had so blinded me, that I had never been able to see that which is written in these Epistles, and in other parts of the Word of God, as it were with a sun beam. The result, however, of this examination was, that I became fully convinced, although against my own will as it were, that Episcopacy was the only form of Church Government revealed in the Word of God, and observed by the Apostles of Christ and by their successors; and that Congregational Independency had not, as some of its strenuous adherents and advocates have been obliged to confess, the slightest shadow of a foundation in the Sacred Scriptures. Being, therefore, overpowered by the force of these truths, I felt bound in conscience, however reluctantly, and how much soever it was opposed to my own habits and feelings, entirely to leave the Dissenters, to solicit

baptism at the hands of a duly authorized Clergyman, and regularly to attend the Church, which I now began to do. But on this being discovered, I was beset on all sides by my old Dissenting associates. "Towgood's Letters*," which I had read some time before, and other Dissenting Works, were put into my hands. In letters written to me, the Church was ridiculed, and I was very *liberally* and charitably accused of ignorance and inconsistency, and of misunderstanding and of misapplying the Scriptures, and other means of annoyance were also resorted to; but as I was pretty firmly established in some of the fundamental truths, all in the end proved ineffectual.

The last stumbling block in the way of my conforming to the Established Church was, the alleged "immoral conduct of the Clergy," which was now perpetually rung in my ears. And I confess, that as I did not then know, but that the Clergy were immoral to the extent which the Dissenters insinuate; and did not then perceive that it is in virtue of his office, and not in virtue of his own moral character, that a Minister performs his ministerial functions; this accusation had great weight with me, and it was some time before my mind became settled upon the subject. But I began at length, every time I heard it mentioned, to enquire for instances of it in the neighbourhood wherever I happened to be at the time; and upon the names of the surrounding Clergy being called over, the result was always attended with shame and confusion to the parties laying the charge; one instance excepted; and in that the Clergyman had been prevented from performing any spiritual functions above four years. So that I soon saw very evidently that such a sweeping charge was nothing but a most wilful and malicious falsehood, fabricated by Dissenters for the express purpose of stabbing the Church through the sides of her Clergy; and every day confirms me more strongly

* See Appendix No. VI.

than ever in the conviction of this truth. And when I recollect that Dissenters *piously* recommend "a KEEN HATRED, and now and then a little ROUND ABUSE OF THE CHURCH," in order "to keep up PURE *attachment to Dissenting principles*,"* I perfectly understand their reasons for indulging in such *purely* false accusations; these are, indeed, at present, the very life and soul of Dissent; it avowedly cannot be "*kept up*," without them. But before they attempt to cast the mote out of their brother's eye, they assuredly ought to cast the *beam* out of their own;—before they accuse the Clergy of immorality, they ought to be sure that Dissenting Teachers are all strictly moral. This I know they wish to be taken for granted, as it too frequently is; for people naturally think, that those who so boldly accuse others of a crime, can surely never be guilty of the same themselves; especially when they are perpetually talking about their "*tender consciences*," and modestly declaring that they are "*already purified*." Dissenters, however, above all persons in the world, should be careful of provoking recriminations of this nature. Before they throw stones at the windows of their neighbours, they would do well to consider that their own are made of the same brittle material. For I will readily undertake, at any time, to point out as many instances—I might say more—of immoral Dissenting Teachers, in proportion, as you or any other Dissenter can, of immoral Clergymen. There are above twelve thousand Clergymen in England, and about two thousand Dissenting Teachers; if, therefore, I can produce one immoral Dissenting Teacher to six immoral Clergymen produced by you, my task would be accomplished, and I should consider that a very easy task indeed. I hate the conduct of a fox-hunting Parson as much as any person can do; but allow me to say, that I hate the conduct of a gossiping, tattling, backbiting, lying, and slandering

* See the Eclectic Review, a Dissenting Periodical, 1832, p. 144.

Dissenting Teacher a vast deal more. I would not screen an immoral Clergyman, nor palliate his guilt in the slightest degree, but punish him most severely. At the same time, a man must be utterly destitute of even a grain of common sense, to believe even a twentieth part of the instances of immorality alleged against the Clergy by Dissenters. For only let a Clergyman expose some of their false doctrines and extravagancies in his sermon on the Sunday, and as sure as possible some gross crime—some heinous offence will be imputed to him by those *pious* people before the week is out. Instances of immorality amongst such a numerous body of men there will be, and considering the nature of things we need not expect it to be otherwise; they are, however, I rejoice to say, comparatively speaking, extremely rare. Even Mr. James, himself a bitter enemy of the Church, speaking of worthy and excellent Clergymen, says—“they are continually multiplying in every part of the country, *and to such a degree, that if the reasons of Dissent were to be found only in the conduct of the Clergy*, instead of the principles of the Establishment, it would soon be *difficult indeed* to withdraw from the communion of the Church of England.”* Let us, therefore, hear no more about the immoral conduct of the Clergy, for that disgracefully false accusation has been sufficiently hacknied†.

My mind having now become comfortably settled with regard to all matters of importance concerning the Church, I entirely left the Dissenters and became a regular Churchman, in practice, as I already was in principle. This was, however, altogether, as all my relatives, friends and connexions, without a single exception, were Dissenters, a very up-hill piece of business, and nothing but pure conviction either would or could have ever induced me to have taken such a step. All my old friends, with but one or two very respected exceptions, turned very shy: I had, therefore, entirely

* James, p. 13, Note.

† See Appendix No. VII.

new connexions to form. And so far was conforming to the Church, from being to my temporal advantage, as was insinuated, that I could easily demonstrate to any one that it was then, and has been to the present moment, the very reverse of it, and materially so too. Nevertheless, I can truly say, that no occurrence of my life is ever remembered with any thing like such feelings of unfeigned gratitude. It is to me a subject of continual praise and thankfulness to the blessed God, that ever he opened my eyes to see the unscriptural and wicked nature of the whole system of Congregational Independency, as to both its principles and practice. And I pray that it would please God in mercy, to convince the sincere and well-disposed of the Dissenters of their errors, and guide them into the truth, that by the influence of his Holy Spirit he would enable them to shake off the trammels of party; to lay aside the prejudices with which their minds are blinded, and to examine the whole matter over fairly and fully, with the single view of acknowledging and embracing that which is according to truth, regardless of consequences. For sure I am, that the result would be as in my own case, the rejection of Dissent and schism, and union with the true Apostolic Church of Christ. If they will steadily view the "Dissenting interest" as it at present exists, they will not fail to see not only that it stands on a very unsafe foundation, but that, in what they consider a spiritual point of view, it is widely different from what it once was. They will immediately discover not only that great numbers of their Congregations, be-fooled and bewitched by their Dissenting principles, have fallen headlong into the hopeless gulf of Socinianism, and that others are verging towards it; but also that most of them are fast becoming nothing more than a kind of religio-political clubs, led on by their *interested* Teachers, many of whom are little else than mere political demagogues, uniting with all the Radicals, Papists, Socinians, Deists, and Infidels in the country, in their hellish

attempts to overturn its sacred and civil institutions ; bedazzling the ignorant and unwary with their empty oratory and tinsel eloquence, and bewildering them with their specious arguments and ridiculous sophistry, and leading them on thus infatuated to discontent, anarchy, and crime. And though in opposition to Churchmen, they are for ever hypocritically canting about " My kingdom is not of this world," they will ever be found amongst the first and foremost in coming out of that kingdom, which they say is not of this world, into that which is, and becoming the instigators of democratic scheming, and very frequently the prominent leaders of the political meetings of the radical and other common disturbers of the peace and comfort of the country. The consequence of such worldly proceedings on the part of the Dissenting Teachers is, that they lead away many of their people with them ; and that Dissenters are generally cold, formal, and worldly-minded, and that what they themselves consider true and vital godliness and spiritual-mindedness, are at a very low ebb amongst them and fast declining. I would, therefore, earnestly and most affectionately exhort all those amongst the Dissenters who are sincerely anxious for the welfare of their immortal souls, and desirous of living holy, righteous, godly, and peaceable lives, to adopt the course I have done, and " come out from amongst them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing." I can assure them, as one hoping for eternal life, that they would be amply repaid and fully satisfied with that increase of real spiritual peace and solid comfort of mind, which they would enjoy in communion with the Church. They would there find no incitements to the exercise of those deadly enemies of all true godliness ; I mean spiritual pride and hypocrisy, and the uncharitable spirit of rashly judging others, which constitute indeed the greater part of a Dissenter's religion. Dissent is indeed a religion of opposition and of rash judgment ; the religion of a party implying and carrying upon the

very face of it, the illiberal condemnation of all those from whom it Dissents. Opposition and excitement are the very life and soul of Dissent. It is entirely upheld by them—entirely supported by continually exciting those baser passions of the human heart, “envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness.” Dissenters themselves hesitate not to avow, that “pure attachment to Dissenting principles requires to be kept up in minds of a certain class by a KEEN HATRED, and now and then a LITTLE ROUND ABUSE OF THE CHURCH.”* Such indeed, are the diabolical sentiments by which Dissenting Teachers are actuated, and they ought to be quite sufficient to disgust every truly pious Dissenter, and to drive him beyond the reach of their contaminating and deadly, and may I not say damning influence? In the Church, a Christian may walk on in the fear of God, and pursue the even tenor of his way with humility and in all godly sincerity—he there finds nothing to excite or foster spiritual pride or hypocrisy. If the sole object of his highest ambition be the promotion of his spiritual and eternal interests, he may there accomplish it without pride or ostentation; and having no rival to oppose, he will there find that “pure attachment to *his* principles does *not* require to be kept up by a *keen hatred*, and now and then a *little round abuse* ;” he will feel that pure attachment to his own pure principles can only be kept up by pure and holy means; and that those principles which “*require*” such means as ‘*keen hatred and round abuse*’ to support them, are just as fiend-like as the means themselves, or they would not “*require*” them, and could not be served by them. Had I been told whilst a Dissenter, that I could enjoy far more true spiritual comfort and peace of mind, and real happiness, in communion with the Church than amongst the Dissenters, I should certainly not have believed it. I thought it

impossible, but experience, always the best teacher, has taught me that such is really the case. The true Christian may there enjoy sterling piety and vital godliness, in a degree in which he cannot possibly enjoy them amongst Dissenters. He may, I do not deny, see abuses connected with the Church, for perfection is not of earthly growth; but being extraneous and not inherent in the Church, they can in no respect affect him in a spiritual point of view, nor in any other, except he be determined to act the part of a busy-body, or an officious meddler with matters that do not particularly concern him. Whereas the abuses of Dissent naturally spring from the system itself—are inherent in it, and inseparably connected with it, and require as their only remedy ‘*curationem carnificis*,’ the cure of the hangman—the destruction of the whole system.

It seems that Dissenters themselves are beginning to see that their system is hardly as scriptural and pure as they have been accustomed to consider it, for I am glad, that almost, if not quite twenty Dissenting Ministers have lately conformed to the Church, and become steady and consistent Ministers at her heavenly altar. And it is worthy of remark, that numbers of the sons of Dissenting Ministers and wealthy Dissenters have entered the Ministry of the Established Church, and that the wealthier and more respectable part of the Dissenting Congregations are continually leaving the “Dissenting interest,” and conforming to the Church. So that I would hope that a spirit of enquiry and examination is becoming more prevalent amongst Dissenters, for I know that the result would be a determination to shake off the fetters of party, and not to be led captive by the specious reasoning and empty pretences of their ignorant or interested Teachers; who, finding it far more respectable to live by preaching the money out of the pockets of their deluded victims than by honestly working for it, are the only persons benefitted by Dissent, and *they* would be

far more honourably employed at the respective handicrafts which most of them have left, than by sowing the seeds of heresy and schism in the Church of Christ.

I know it may be said that some Clergymen have left the Church, and have become Dissenting Teachers. That a few have done so is certainly true, and that they are no loss whatever to the Church, but quite the reverse of it, is equally true. Dissenters themselves say so in these words. "We have seen so much *error, dogmatism, and instability* marking the career of those who have of late years quitted the National Establishment, that we have begun to *tremble* for any Clergyman who talks of becoming a Non-conformist. It were easy to show that recent secessions have been *no essential loss to the Church*, and no real gain to sober, enlightened, and scriptural Dissent."* Hence it appears that Dissenters themselves consider such secessions no worthy acquisition to their own ranks, and no loss whatever to the Church; and I certainly agree with them, and do think, that if all others of the same stamp, such as Messrs. Nihill, Acaster, and Riland, would act like honest and conscientious men, and leave the communion with which they (nothing to their own credit) openly avow they do not agree, the Church would be greatly benefitted. They pretend to have great affection for the Church, and I am sure they can no better manifest it than by leaving her, for they would thus do her the greatest kindness of which they are capable, whilst they hold their present opinions, and they would at the same time ease their own *consciences*. But whilst they devour her loaves and fishes—whilst they '*eat of her bread, and lift up their heel against her*;' they are neither more nor less than the *SINONS* within the citadel, and ought at once to be thrown over the ramparts into the camp of the enemy. Nothing but the great Christian forbearance of the Church prevents its being done. How must Infidels

and semi-Infidel Dissenters on the one hand, and Papists on the other, rejoice to see any of the Clergy labouring to overthrow the sole object of their insatiable envy and malice! What a pity it is that such Clergymen do not turn their minds to the *principles* of the Church, and study *them*, and endeavour to *understand* them; were they really to do so, they would have far less cause to be dissatisfied with them. If they fancy that Dissent engrosses every spiritual excellency, and that the nearer the Church approaches Dissent, the more excellent she will be, let them ask those of the Clergy who have been Dissenting Teachers, and they will receive perfect satisfaction. Indeed, if I thought that those Clergymen who have turned Dissenting Teachers would speak the real undisguised sentiments of their own hearts, I would say at once—*Ask them?* for if they have been long amongst the Dissenters, and know their principles and practices, they would tell the enquirers that which would make them abundantly satisfied both with the Church, and their own honoured, and so much envied situation as her Ministers.

But, again, I must be allowed to express my thorough conviction, that if the respectable, upright, and religious part of the Dissenters were fully aware of all the crafty wiliness, and pious trickery, and ambitious scheming of many of their Teachers, they would soon leave them to their own resources—to fall to their own proper level, and unite themselves with the Established Church, where no such mean artifices are ever resorted to, and would never annoy them.—Let any impartial and unprejudiced person, whether Churchman or Dissenter, take a glance at the proceedings and pamphlets of the Society set on foot ostensibly “for promoting Ecclesiastical knowledge,” but really for the purpose of “promoting the dissemination of Dissenting falsehood and sophistry, and of overthrowing the Church of England *vi et fraude*,” and then judge of the spirit and principles by which Dissenters are actuated. This

Society was started for the *professed* purpose of making more widely known "the principles of Dissent"—"sober, enlightened, and scriptural Dissent," if any one knows what and where it is; but amongst its paltry and expensive publications, we find tracts "On Episcopacy," "On the Nineteenth Article of the Church of England," "Modern Prelacy," "Tithes," &c. &c., which are direct and malignant attacks upon the Church of England, and have of course a great deal to do with making known "the principles of Dissent." If, however, they do not exemplify "the principles of Dissent," they loudly enough proclaim the *practices* of some Dissenters. The Tracts on Tithes, are shameful and scurrilous to the very last degree, and fraught with principles of injustice and iniquity, such as are but too common with the Radical and Infidel press. These Tracts were written, it appears, by Dr. Bennett, who is, as they tell us, a very great and *learned* man. This said Doctor sometime ago published a sermon, sometimes called the "bone and muscle sermon," on the duty of Dissenters to support their Teachers more liberally and respectably than they generally do; and a comparison of this sermon with his unprincipled Tracts on Tithes, would afford an excellent comment on that admirable rule of our Blessed Lord, "all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Let him compare the two together, with this golden rule before him, and blush and be silent. For according to his morality, it is perfectly right for Dissenting Teachers to be respectably maintained, by squeezing money to which they have no right out of the pockets of their people, but extremely wrong for the Clergy to have that which is their undoubted right.*

But indeed, not a Tract of this *famous* Society has yet been published without insinuations and calumnies against the Church, conveyed in language which clearly

* See Appendix No. VIII.

indicates the source whence they are derived to their shameless propagators.* That I may not be thought too severe upon this scandalous Society, I will add a quotation from Dr. Pye Smith himself, an eminent Dissenter, and I am glad to add that he appears an upright and conscientious man. He was, it seems, one of the Committee of the Society previously to its second annual meeting; but owing to the violent and abusive nature of its tracts and proceedings, he then insisted on the withdrawal of his name from the list of the Committee—protested against the proceedings of the Society, and said, that if the Committee did not in future exercise greater vigilance in “guarding against violations of equity” towards the Church, he would leave the Society altogether. The Doctor’s remarks had particular reference to the objectionable Tracts of Dr. Bennett, who, in consequence, addressed to Dr. Smith a letter, accusing him, as the Doctor himself remarks, “not only of inconsistency, but of something like treachery.” To this Dr. Smith wrote an answer, in which he says, “At the meeting itself I was *pained and distressed* with the general style of both sentiment and expressions in some of the speakers, and with the *boisterous* acclamation of the hearers,—indications of mind and demonstrations of feeling which I thought *lamentably at variance with the idea of a Religious Society* assembled in a place of worship for the purpose of promoting a *professed superiority* of regard to the authority of our Blessed Redeemer.” Thus does the Dissenting Dr. Smith condemn the unhallowed proceedings of this Society, whose wicked unprincipled leaders strictly act upon the unblushing and scandalous avowal of the organ of Dissent, that “pure attachment to Dissenting principles *requires* to be kept up in minds of a certain class by a *keen hatred*,

* O’Connell, the Popish Agitator, on receiving some of the publications of this Society from Mr. Wilks, told him that he “viewed them with high approbation.” Does not this speak volumes?

and now and then a little round abuse of the Church." It is pleasing, however, to see that amongst such a corrupt mass as the Dissenters now are, Dr. Smith and several other worthy Dissenters—men of sense and piety—men who would be ornaments to a far more scriptural and more holy cause, are disgusted at such wicked practices—the pure result of their principles. Why do not such men leave a sect whose proceedings are so abominable, that their own consciences force them to condemn them; and conform to the Established Church, where they would find far more spiritual peace and happiness, and would never be "*pained and distressed*" with such unholy proceedings as Dissenters are now practising?

There is also another Society, called the Home Missionary Society, supported by Dissenters for the purpose of disseminating the seeds of division, discord, heresy, and schism, in every town and village in the kingdom, which may yet be destitute of the blessings of Congregational Independency, or as Dissenters will have it, of the Gospel,—for with them the former is synonymous with the latter, although as I will hereafter most clearly prove, it has not a shadow of Scriptural truth about it. This Society by its very existence condemns the whole body of the Clergy, and proceeds in the plenitude of its *liberality* upon the very charitable and *modest* supposition, that they are ignorant of the Gospel, and incapable of preaching it. For the purpose, therefore, of supplying the deficiency occasioned by the ignorance and negligence of the stupid Clergy, this Society sends out into the country a set of very spruce, genteel, important, and extremely modest young lads. These boys strut forth with mighty consequence into villages to preach, as they term it, in opposition to steady, pious, and devoted Clergymen, old enough to be their grandfathers. The Society, however, profess to send their itinerating agents into no place where what they call the Gospel is preached by the Clergyman; but this is a piece of Dissenting

craft—mere pretence, made for the wily purpose of blinding the eyes of some well-disposed, though sadly mistaken persons, who would not support the Society if they knew their preachers were sent into such places. They have, however, a predilection for towns and villages, where the Clergy have been labouring devotedly for the spiritual good of their people. As a proof of this among several which might be produced, I could name a large and respectable town with a worthy and excellent Rector, who, besides, employing a Curate, faithfully preaches what Dissenters themselves would not deny to be the Gospel, and otherwise anxiously labours for both the spiritual and temporal welfare of his parishioners, and is well respected by them. His Lady also is a very Dorcas, working incessantly for the poor. And though he has enjoyed the Rectory above ten years, he has yet received but very little if any benefit from it. Having a very handsome income independently of it, the poor have been the great objects of his bounty. Notwithstanding all this, however, and their own hypocritical professions, the Society sent one of their preaching agents into the town to sow the seeds of discord and disturbance between him and his people. And even the Preacher himself, on being spoken to on the impropriety of being stationed there in direct opposition to the professions of the Society, admitted that such was the case, and said, that he would state the matter to the Society, and had no doubt that he would be withdrawn. The circumstance was shortly afterwards mentioned to me, together with the expectation that the Preacher would be withdrawn; but having a little more knowledge of the wily and jesuitical craft of the party, from so much intimate connexion with them, I expressed my firm belief that the man would not ultimately be removed, or if he were, that another would be sent. The latter has proved to be the case, the first Preacher was withdrawn, but another immediately sent, who is there, I believe, at the present moment, and

likely to continue there in spite of all the Society's professions.*

Deceit and hypocrisy, however, are not the only commodities in which this Society deals. Misrepresentation and falsehood are also amongst the articles of its traffic; for in one of its late reports, on page the twenty-ninth, it states that "a Dissenting Minister in a large and populous town asserts, that within eleven miles of him there are twenty-nine villages, containing a population of 10,220, destitute of religious instruction either in the Established Church, or among Dissenters." Now the Home Missionary Society has been repeatedly challenged to produce proof of this assertion, but has never yet done so.† It is, therefore, evidently a falsehood, and one of the boldest and most impudent falsehoods that ever was fabricated, and one of the basest and most outrageous attacks on the Church that is to be met with. Where is the shame of such men? Where were their "*tender consciences*" forsooth, when they asserted that the Clergy of nine and twenty villages, all within eleven miles of one town, are so utterly negligent of their duty, as never to perform the service in their respective Churches? Shame! shame! upon such sanctified slander!! The scandalous falsehood was undoubtedly asserted to "beguile the unstable," and to make the ignorant believe that there is such great dearth of religious instruction, for the purpose of getting money out of their pockets to support their preaching hirelings, who are continually strolling about the country and propagating the licentious principles of Congregational Independency;

* A Meeting-house is now about to be built in this town, which, when erected, as the sum of FOUR HUNDRED pounds is furnished by some man or body of men in London, because the people would not VOLUNTARILY build one for themselves, will for ever stand not only a monument of the hypocrisy and perfidy of the Home Missionary Society, but also of the utter inefficiency of the pretended "VOLUNTARY SYSTEM" and the gross inconsistency of its deluded adherents.

† See British Magazine, May, 1832, p. 283. This is a most excellent Magazine, containing information of the highest importance to the Clergy, and to every friend of our excellent Church.

“ of this sort are they who creep into the houses, and lead captive silly women.”* Dissenters do say that this Society is contributed to by some of the Clergy, but I must hope that this too is a falsehood, asserted for the purpose of impressing some Churchmen with a favourable idea of its proceedings. I cannot imagine that any Clergyman can be so misled as to subscribe to a Society, whose object is to propagate the unscriptural notions of Congregational Independency, and to circumvent and undermine the Established Church, and that by the most dishonourable and unhallowed means.

As a further illustration of the spirit and principles by which Dissenting Teachers are actuated towards the Church, they hailed the appearance of Beverley's infamous letter to the Archbishop of York with joy and delight: and not only so, but bought it and lent it about, and exerted themselves to the very utmost to push it into circulation, not only amongst their own people, but wherever they could get it in. Some worthy Dissenters, however did, to my knowledge, manifest their good sense, by condemning it *in toto*, as the most malicious and calumnious thing they had ever seen. And, indeed, let any man possessed of the slightest feelings, I will not say of a Christian, but merely of human nature, for I care not if he be an avowed Infidel, read only about half the twentieth page of that precious epistle, (mine is of the fifth edition) and say whether he ever read any thing so truly fiend-like in all his life. For there, after most immodestly describing “ all the rogues and villains in the kingdom,” under all the characters which they can sustain, he most deliberately says, “ IF THEY WOULD ALL DIE TO-MORROW IT WOULD BE VERY DESIRABLE.” Yes, the *holy*, the *pious*, the *Dissenting* Mr. Beverley hesitates not to say that “ it would be *very desirable*” if *all* the wicked people in the kingdom were cut off “ *to-morrow*”

* 2d Timothy iii, 6.

in the midst of their sins and transgressions—their guilty souls summoned to the bar of an angry and terrible God, to receive that awful sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”* Who, worthy of the name of a man, could pronounce such an awful event as “*desirable*,” or even think of it, without shuddering at the horrible idea? Well might Solomon say that even “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”† How different the language of Mr. Beverley, himself a sinful creature, from that of the blessed Redeemer, in reference to his *enemies*, even when suffering the bitter pangs of crucifixion, heightened by their reviling taunts. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”‡

But to crown the whole, this very Mr. Beverley, after thus “dealing damnation round the land,” has transformed himself into a Minister of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his Ministers also be transformed as the Ministers of righteousness.§ And if the sermon which Mr. Beverley has published, may be considered—as undoubtedly it may—a fair specimen of what he preaches, he has clearly made out his title to be any thing but a Minister of Christ. He, however, modestly styles himself such; and if denouncing damnation to the Church—if reviling and slandering the Clergy as Priests of Anti-Christ—Priests of the Whore of Babylon—and even as murderers!!!—if delighting in bitterness, wrath, clamour, and false accusations, with “envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,” constitute a Minister of the Gospel of Christ, then is Mr. Beverley one in sincerity and in truth—one “in whom there is no guile.” And as “*pares cum paribus facile congregantur*,” ‘birds of a feather readily flock together,’

* Matt. xxv. 41.

† Luke xxiii, 34.

‡ Proverbs xii, 10.

§ 2d Corinthians xi, 4.

Mr. Beverley is become a Congregational Independent Minister, and a member and speaker of the famous Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society, of which, indeed, I confess I know not a more worthy adjunct, nor a Society more worthy of such a precious and truly honouring addition. I cannot but congratulate Dissenters on the acquisition of one so exceedingly well calculated to assist in upholding "the cause"—one so verily honourable to the "Dissenting interest."*

I could adduce numerous other instances, illustrative of the spirit and principles by which Dissenting Teachers are actuated with regard to the Church, but my limits expressly forbid it; and, indeed, enough has been said already for the purpose of showing that which must be evident to the least observation. I could also, but for the same reason, give an amusing exposé of the various mean tricks and petty scheming of Dissenting Teachers and Congregations, sometimes in unison with each other, for the advancement of their common cause, and very frequently in opposition to each other, in support of their respective whims and capricious fancies; but I may leave that for Mr. James to accomplish—he is far more competent to such a task than I am. He *has* given us some faint sketches of some of the proceedings amongst Dissenters in his "Church Member's Guide," and could have drawn a far more striking likeness of Dissent had he pleased. He has there told the world that Dissent abounds with evils of almost every description; and knowing such to be the case, how he can conscientiously remain connected with such a system—a system which he has himself shewn to be so unscriptural and full of evil, it is most difficult to imagine. Why do not such men abandon it at once and set their consciences at rest?

* "The cause" and "the Dissenting interest" written in full would be 'the cause of the Dissenting Ministers' and the Dissenting Ministers' interest,' for the teachers are certainly the only persons at all "interested" by Dissent, the people, out of whom they live by begging the money out of their pockets, are the very reverse of it.

They know and acknowledge it to be wrong, and yet they adhere to it; but where are their consciences—their “tender consciences?” they cannot be easy—it is impossible! Such men may be enjoying a kind of distinction and respectability in their present stations, which they would feel it hard to immolate at the shrine of conscience; but what satisfaction will eminence of such a description afford them when this world shall be receding from their view? An easy conscience is, moreover, no uncomfortable companion through life.

One of the many evils arising out of Dissent and schism, and not the least, is, that it destroys almost all that authority and discipline, which the most superficial reader of the New Testament cannot fail to perceive inalienably belongs to the Church. Should the Church proceed to the excommunication of one of her members who had disgraced his holy profession, and dishonoured that holy name by which he was called, what would be the result? Why he would laugh at the wholesome exercise of that, the most awful part of the authority of the Church, and immediately take shelter under the principles of Independency, and very probably become a schismatic, if not a heretic, by uniting with one of the hundred sects of Dissenters, who would any one of them gladly receive him. If reprehended in any respect, he would immediately reply in the language, and consistently with the principles, of Dissent, that he had a right to reject or choose his own Spiritual Teacher wherever he pleased, and that he would do so; and that as he had full liberty of conscience, and no man had any right to exercise any authority whatever over him, he would act accordingly; for if he preferred being without any Spiritual Teacher at all, he had an undoubted right to enjoy such preference. Thus “in these days, when there is no king in Israel, every man doeth that which is right in his own eyes;” and considering, in the true spirit of Dissent, that he is lord of his own actions, indulges in unbridled licentiousness.

The principles of Independency are, indeed, the principles of depraved human nature, instilled into man and fostered in him by his great enemy the Devil—the first Dissenter. It was with the promise of their being Independents, that he deceived our first parents; and “brought death into the world and all our woe.” “Ye shall be as Gods,”* says he, meaning that they should be Independent. And they believed him, and as one God of course would not obey another, they immediately shook off their allegiance to their kind and beneficent Creator. And all their degenerate offspring have been imbued with the very same principles of pride, Dissent, and licentiousness, and beguiled by the same promise of the Devil in some way or other. “Ye shall be as Gods,” says he, to our modern Dissenters; and puffed up with the idea, they immediately and proudly respond, “We will be as Gods”—we will enjoy full liberty of conscience—we will do as we please—no man has any right to exercise any authority over us—we will choose our own Teachers; and as we are as Gods, they shall preach and act as we please—they are our servants, we hire them, and pay them their wages, and they shall do as we please; we have heaped them to ourselves, and they shall scratch our “itching† ears;” if not, we will dismiss them, and choose others who will. Such are the unholy sentiments by which Dissenters are actuated; and the effects of which Dissenting Teachers constantly and *deservedly* feel. And can any one deny that the very same principles which now induce some to choose their own Teachers have induced others to choose their own Gods? If, as Dissenters contend, a man has a right to worship *as* he pleases, why has he not an equal right to worship *what* he pleases? And if a man has a right to choose his own *Teacher*, why has he not a right to choose his own *God*? Prove if you can that the former does not include the latter; and

* Genesis iii, 5.

† 2d Timothy iv, 3.

that when a man chooses his own Teacher, he does *not* choose his own God. Every Dissenter, in choosing his own Teacher, rejects and despises the commissioned and duly authorized Ministers of God, and through them God himself. When those old Dissenters, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whom the Apostle Jude considers as a kind of type of Dissenters under the Christian Dispensation, dissented from Moses and Aaron, Moses viewed their Dissent as an offence against God; for, in addressing Korah as their leader, he said, "thou and all thy company are gathered together *against the Lord*."* And that the Almighty viewed their offence in the same light is certain, from his destroying them. Our blessed Saviour also says to his Ministers, "He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me."† Every Dissenter, therefore, in choosing his own Teacher, despiseth and rejecteth God in despising and rejecting his regularly appointed Ministers,‡ who are his representatives acting in his name, and in virtue of the authority which he has committed to them through a medium of his own appointment.

In short, "the principles of Dissent" or Independence, influence every son and daughter of Adam, more or less, and are the source of all the evil of every kind on earth. Drunkenness, adultery, robbery, and murder, and every species of iniquity and vice, pro-

* Numbers xvi, 11.

† Luke x, 16.

‡ Allow the Clergy to be regularly appointed Ministers, and this argument is unanswerable. And if THEY be not, who are? Can ALL Dissenting Ministers put in their claim to Divine appointment? And if not ALL, where is the line of distinction to be drawn? Has God cautioned us so repeatedly against false teachers, and yet given us no rule whereby we may know false teachers from the true ones? If he has given us no rule whereby we may know them, what is the use of all the cautions he has given us against false teachers? If he has given us a rule, what is that rule? If it is not regular unbroken succession from the Apostles, what is it? Tell us what it is, for without knowing it, a great portion of the Scriptures are useless. Without this rule we cannot know whether or not, we are despising the true Ministers of Christ, and through them Christ himself, which is certainly a most dangerous state to be in. We cannot at any rate be blamed for considering regular unbroken succession the rule, until you shall have told us what the rule is, if that be not it.

ceed from those infernal principles of licentiousness and libertinism, for which Dissenting Teachers contend under the specious names of "liberty of conscience" and liberalism. I know that *they* do not allow their principles to carry *them* to such lengths, but I also know that others do, and consistently so too; for some, alas! too many, claim and take liberty of conscience sufficient to allow them to practise deceit, falsehood, cheating, robbery, and even murder itself. And were it not for the wholesome restraints imposed upon the consciences of men, and their liberty circumscribed by ecclesiastical and civil laws, their number would be so great, that the state of society would be intolerable. The consciences of some we know are "seared with a hot iron,"* and will, therefore, allow them to break the laws of God and man with impunity; and yet such persons have just as much right to enjoy full liberty of conscience as any others—if not, what is the reason? It may be said, that the liberty of conscience for which Dissenters plead only relates to religious matters, and is not licentiousness; but, then, who is to determine what is religious, and what is not? and what is licentiousness, and what is not? Every man must of course be left to determine this for himself; if not, there is an end of his liberty of conscience at once; and as every man will always judge favourably for himself, just judgment will never be done. What one man would consider full liberty of conscience, another would not; neither, indeed, would the *same* man at another time. There would thus, never be any certainty. The fact is, the laws of God revealed in his Holy Word, are to be the rule of men's *whole* conduct, and not their own consciences; neither are their consciences to be the interpreters of those laws: to admit that they are, would be just as absurd as to say that every man is to be his own interpreter of our civil laws: and, indeed, if he be the interpreter

* 2d Timothy iv, 2.

of the laws of God for himself, surely he may be of the laws of the King, which are in every respect far inferior. The interpretation of the civil laws of England, however, belongs exclusively to the judges and magistrates of the land, who are orderly and regularly appointed by the King; and if the interpretation of the laws of the Church, contained in the Word of God, does not belong exclusively to the judges and magistrates—the Ministers—“those that have the RULE”* in the Church, tell me unequivocally, distinctly, positively, and decisively, to whom it does belong. If it does not belong to the Church—if every man is to be allowed, according to the principles of Dissent, to interpret those laws for himself, a door is opened for the practise of all kinds of libertinism and licentiousness whatever. One man, in the liberty of his conscience, would break one law, and another, another law, till none would be obeyed. I caught a man myself, a short time ago, in the very act of breaking the laws of both God and man at once. I remonstrated with him on the sinfulness and impropriety of his conduct; he endeavoured to palliate the offence, and made excuses; but on my pressing him a little more closely, he at once rudely replied, “You have no business with me, Sir, if you have a mind to go to Heaven, go;—and if I have a mind to go to Hell, I’ll go—you have nothing to do with it.” I then said, “I spoke to you civilly; but I assure you that if you have a mind to go to Hell you shall not go quietly, for if ever I catch you acting in the same manner again, I will most assuredly bring you to justice. The truth is, the man was influenced by the “principles of Dissent;” he thought that I had no right to interfere with the liberty of his conscience; and that as he had not chosen me to be his spiritual Teacher, I had no right whatever to teach him. And if the licentious principles of Dissent be correct, he was perfectly right; neither

* Hebrews xiii, 17.

I nor any one else had any right to interfere with him ; and I defy you to point out wherein he was at all inconsistent with your Dissenting principles.

I could further show both the absurdity and iniquity of the " principles of Dissent."—I could easily point out that even the *preaching* and *teaching* of Dissenting Teachers, and the *public worship* of Dissenters, are inconsistent with their own foolish principles.—I could demonstrate that those wicked principles have a tendency to destroy Christianity itself, and to abolish true religion from the face of the earth ; but I must, bring this letter to a close, I have already extended it very far beyond what I at first intended. I will, however, just observe, that I do sincerely wish and trust that what I have advanced and may hereafter advance, may be instrumental in opening the eyes of the well-disposed, sincere, and moderate Dissenters, to the very unscriptural nature of their system, and in leading them to unite with the Church, where they would not only avoid the common, though heinous, sin of schism, but enjoy true religion without excitement, piety without ostentation, and peace without disturbance. I know many of them see great evils in Dissent, and some of the bad effects of its principles, and are tired of the system ; but habits and connexions have great influence over them, and being prejudiced against the Church, they unjustly condemn it without giving its doctrines and discipline any thing that can be called, careful attention. But I would earnestly entreat them once again, to cast aside their prejudices, and shake off the trammels of Dissent if but for a moment, and give the Church a fair and candid examination, and I doubt not in the least, that they would themselves be highly gratified at the result.

With regard to you, Sir, to whom as a Minister and leader of the sect, I have addressed myself, and for whom, together with your Teaching Brethren, these remarks, and those which may follow, are *more particularly* intended, I well know the extreme difficulty of

gaining your attention to any sound argument of sober discussion on this subject. I know that here your education—your habits—your mode of thinking—your conversation, as well as your *personal interest*, present a manifold and close covering against the admission of one beam of the light of truth. You feel as if your all was concerned in holding up “the Cause:” if that should fall, you must fall with it—must retire back into those more honourable stations in life, whence ye have risen. Yet as many of your Ministering Brethren have lately abandoned their Dissenting notions, and conformed to the Church, I do not despair of seeing many more follow their honourable and laudable example. And if any thing which I may advance be the means, in ever so trifling a degree, of producing such a happy effect, or of enabling some of your people who are earnestly bent upon their eternal welfare, to see the erroneous nature of their sentiments, and the great evil of schism, my labour shall not have been in vain, and I shall be perfectly satisfied.

I am,

With all becoming respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient and humble Servant,

L. S. E.

LETTER II.

ON CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENT CHURCHES.

SIR,

HAVING occupied my last with Introductory Observations, I now come more immediately to the subject in hand; fully confident that I shall be able to place before you such statements as will be sufficient to convince every candid enquirer after truth, that I am not without substantial reasons for rejecting Dissent, and embracing the religion of the Established Church;—reasons strong, manifold, and incontrovertible, drawn from an attentive and careful comparison, of Congregational Independency and the Established Church with each other, and both with the Word of God. And as you are ever ostentatiously asserting that the Word of God, and that alone, is your only rule of faith and practice, I undertake to show that such assertions are utterly false, by proving that your whole system is entirely destitute of any foundation whatever in the Sacred Scriptures. In order to do this, the signification of the word “Church,” so frequently occurring in the New Testament, must first be determined. Mr. James, of Birmingham, says, and after him in similar language, your friend, Mr. Scales, of Leeds, that “it has an enlarged, and also a more confined signification, in the Word of God. In some places, it is employed to comprehend the aggre-

gate of believers of every age and nation; hence we read of the 'general Assembly and Church of the first-born;' and of the Church which 'Christ loved and purchased with his own blood.' In its more confined acceptation it means a Congregation of Professing Christians, meeting for worship in one place; hence we read of the Church at Rome, Colosse, Philippi, &c."* In assigning to the word "Church" the first meaning, I fully agree with Mr. James, as I do also in the second; but I dispute that it is used in such a sense in the quotations he has produced. I admit at once that the Church at Rome, the Church at Colosse, and the Church at Philippi, were *Independent*, and so is the Church of England; but that any one of them was *Congregational*, that is, consisted of no more than one Congregation, I defy Mr. James, and all the Dissenting Ministers in the world, to prove. Yet this they must do, to support their own system of Congregational Independency. There are, indeed, *only four* places in all the New Testament where it *can be clearly proved* that the word 'Church' means no more than a single congregation—and not one of them has Mr. James produced. They are these—"Greet the Church, which is in their house"—"the Church which is in their house"—"the Church in thy house"—"the Church which is in his house."† But although these four Churches were *Congregational*, I can easily prove that they were not *Independent*. And although Mr. James himself has said that the word Church "means a congregation meeting for worship in one place," he has not said that the same Congregation was *Independent*; and therefore his Dissenting system of Congregational Independency is not at all supported by the word "Church," *used in the very sense which he has himself assigned to it.*

Mr. James positively says, after giving his ideas of the word—"these are the *only two senses* in which the

* James, p. 6.—Scales's Principles of Dissent, p. 86, 87.

† Rom. xvi, 5. 1 Cor. xvi, 19.—Philemon 2.—Col. iv, 15.

word is ever employed by the Sacred Writers." Now, not to mention that the word used in either of the senses which he has attributed to it proves just nothing at all to his purpose, you know well, that had the word been "employed by the Sacred Writers" in *fifty different senses*, he dares not for the world admit of its having more than *two*, simply because such an admission would be entirely fatal to his own darling scheme of Dissent, and this he well knows. But by examining the Holy Scriptures without Mr. James's Dissenting spectacles, I think I could find at least *five or six different senses* in which the word is there used; but as some of them would be foreign to my present purpose, I shall notice only the three following: It signifies,—First. The Catholic or Universal Church, including all the people of God, of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, that have lived from the beginning, and that shall live to the end of the world. "Christ is the head of the body, the Church."* It signifies—Secondly. The Christians of one family or household, who with probably a few neighbouring Christians, assembled for Divine Worship in their own house, but who were still a part of the collective Church of the respective town or district in which the house was situated. "The Church in thy house." And thirdly. It signifies the faithful Christians of some one town, district, or province, consisting of several Congregations, but constituting at the same time only one Church, as—"The Church of Ephesus." "The Church of Jerusalem." "I persecuted the Church."† As I know you will agree to my first definition of the word, I have only to establish the other two. I, therefore, proceed to the second, in reference to which I observe as before, that there are only four places in the Sacred Writings where the word "Church" can possibly be proved to mean but a single Congregation; and if I can prove that not one

* Col. i. 18.

† Rev. ii, 1.—Acts viii, 1. Gal. i. 13.

of these four little *Congregational* or *House Churches*, was *Independent*, I desire no more; your system will be shown to be destitute of Scriptural foundation, and my task fulfilled.

One of the passages in which the word occurs in this sense is this:—"Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea and Nymphas, and the *Church* which is in his *house*. And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans."* The word "*Church*" here occurs twice in two different senses. In the fifteenth verse it means a single Congregation which assembled in the house of Nymphas; and in the sixteenth, the whole body of Christians at Laodicea. Now as Nymphas dwelt at Laodicea, there must have been at least two Congregational Churches in that City; for had all the Laodicean Christians met in the house of Nymphas, where would have been the Apostle's propriety in describing them, so particularly, as "*the Church* which is in the house of Nymphas;" why did he not term them as in the next verse—"the Church of the Laodiceans;" which they actually must have been, had there been no other Congregational Church in that city? But there were *certainly* two, and very probably several, and yet they are called as in the above quotation; so also above thirty years after, not the *Churches*, but "*the CHURCH*" of the Laodiceans. The truth evidently is, that as the Apostle's salutation in this instance did not concern the whole body of Christians in Laodicea, he commanded it to be given to those for whom he particularly intended it. "Nymphas, and the Church in his house." But as the Epistle *did* concern the whole, he directed it to be read generally to "*the Church of the Laodiceans*," of which the small Congregational Church in the house of Nymphas formed a part, and, therefore, could not be Independent. Indeed, if it had been Independent, it would have formed no part of "*the*

* Col. iv, 15, 16.

Church of the Laodiceans," and would consequently not have enjoyed a share in hearing the Epistle read; which, no doubt, the Apostle intended they should do, in common with all the other members of "the Church of the Laodiceans."

Another of the four passages alluded to, is in the second verse of the Epistle to Philemon:—"the Church in thy house." Philemon lived at Colosse, and the Epistle to him, and that to the collective Church at Colosse, were sent by the same messenger, and at the same time; the one to a particular believing inhabitant, and the other to the whole Church at Colosse. There were consequently at least *two Congregational Churches* at Colosse, except all the Christians at Colosse met in the *house* of Philemon; which certainly was not the case, otherwise St. Paul would never have described them to Philemon so particularly, as "*the Church in thy house.*" But as there were more than one, St. Paul describes the one which he meant particularly, as "the Church in thy house," in distinction from all others. It was, therefore, not Independent, but a constituent part of the Church, or whole body of believers, at Colosse. With this, agrees the learned Dr. Gill, himself a Dissenter, and an enemy of the Church of England, though not worth considering as such, compared with the degenerate political Dissenters of the present day, who are so madly desirous of showing us some of their old Cromwellian tricks. The Doctor comments upon the words, "the Church in thy house" thus:—"in the house of Philemon, and designs *NOT the Church at Colosse* as though it met at his house, but his own family, which for the great piety and religion which were among them, &c. were like a Church of themselves."*

The next of these passages which I introduce to you is, "Greet the Church which is in their house."

* Vide Dr. Gill's Exposition of the Passage:

The house of Priscilla and Aquila is meant; and as they dwelt at Rome, the little Church which met at their house was one of the Congregations which constituted the Church of Rome, or body of faithful Christians in that famous city. Nothing can be more certain than that all the Christians at Rome did not meet in this house, because the persons to whom this Epistle is addressed, were commanded to greet this Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila; and if they had been the members of it, the Apostle would actually have been desiring them to be so kind as to *greet themselves*—the bare supposition of which is not a little absurd. Moreover, the Apostle requested those to whom he addressed the Epistle, to salute above thirty other persons besides those who met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, which very naturally leads us to suppose that they, as well as those to whom he wrote, were distinct from those who did there meet. And, consequently, that there must have been more than one Congregational Church at Rome; and most probably there were several—not one of which was independent; but each, like the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, forming a constituent part of the body of the faithful or Church at Rome; for we nowhere read of the *Churches* at Rome.

I come now to the only remaining passage in which the word ‘Church’ signifies no more than a single congregation: “Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the *Church* that is in their house.” This Epistle was sent from Ephesus, where of course, Aquila and Priscilla then lived; and as they were but working tent-makers, it is not even probable that they occupied a large house,—for rents would, unquestionably, be very high in so populous and celebrated a city as Ephesus then was. And indeed, had they occupied the largest house in the city, it could not have contained the “much people” whom St. Paul “had persuaded and turned away” from their idolatries. For “so mightily grew the word of God

and prevailed" over conjuring books, conjurors, and others, that Demetrius and the craftsmen, fearing "that the temple of the great Goddess Diana, should be despised, and her magnificence destroyed,* raised a great uproar in the city, and filled it with confusion, vainly thinking to stop the mighty progress of Christianity. Now all this would never have been done had there not been, in reality, a very great number of people converted to the faith of the Gospel—a number much greater than could possibly have assembled in the small private house of Aquila and Priscilla. Besides, when St. Paul was at Miletus, "he sent to Ephesus, and called τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους the *Elders, Presbyters*, or Priests of the Church."† And to Timothy he writes "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine."‡ But if the Church of Ephesus consisted of but one Congregation, and was otherwise constituted like your modern pretendedly scriptural Independent Churches, why had it so many Elders or Ministers, for surely one would have been quite as sufficient for a single Congregation then, as you consider it, now? And why did Timothy *remain* at Ephesus to charge *some* to preach sound doctrine; for had the Church of Ephesus consisted of no more than one Congregation, Timothy could, and undoubtedly would, have ministered to it himself? The truth is simply this: the Church of Ephesus, like the Church at Jerusalem and others, not having a building sufficiently large to assemble in, for Divine Worship, formed themselves into several Congregations or House-Churches, each requiring an Elder to minister unto them. And so far were either Congregations or Ministers from being *Independent*, that they all constituted together but one body "the Church of Ephesus," governed by Timothy their Ruler or Bishop, who was without their election or advice, placed over them to

* Vide Acts 19.

† Acts, xx. 17.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 3.

teach the Elders or Presbyters what doctrine to preach—to receive accusations against them, and judge them, and to rebuke them that sinned before all, that others also might fear his judgment and rebukes. That the Church of Ephesus was *Independent* is certainly true, but it is equally as true that it consisted of several Congregations, or that at least it was not *Congregational*. Prove to the contrary if you can.

Having thus made it sufficiently clear, for any unbiassed mind, that these four House-Churches, the only Churches which can be proved to have consisted of no more than one Congregation, were not Independent, I pass on to the consideration of my third definition of the meaning of the word Church in the Sacred Scriptures, which is, that it signifies—The Christians of some one town, district, or province, consisting of several Congregations, but constituting at the same time only one Church; as in these quotations “The Church of Ephesus,”—“The Church at Jerusalem,”—“I persecuted the Church.” To establish my point, then, I have only to prove that the word Church in these passages, includes more Congregations than one; a task indeed, extremely easy. As I have already examined the case of the “Church of Ephesus,” I take “the Church at Jerusalem,” the first Christian Church that was formed. And if any man in his senses, can possibly believe that the *many thousands* who composed this Church, assembled for Divine Worship in one place, he may justly be considered as an extraordinary character, and a fit subject for Dissent, for he will readily enough believe all the remaining absurdities of the Dissenting system. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, that Christ, after his Resurrection, “was seen of above five hundred brethren at once;”* and after St. Peter’s ever memorable sermon on the Day of Pentecost, “there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”† Immediately afterwards, we read

* 1. Cor. xv. 5.

† Acts ii. 41.

that "many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand."* On these words, the learned and *honest* Dissenter before quoted says, "there were so many persons converted *at this time*, for this number *does not include* the three thousand that were converted under the first Sermon, but regards those who *now* became true believers, and were added to THE CHURCH, so that there were *now* eight thousand persons added to it."† And as women are not included in the five thousand, for *ανδρων* is used and not *ανθρωπων*, nor the five hundred who saw Christ after his Resurrection in the three thousand, there could not be less than ten or twelve thousand persons belonging to "THE CHURCH at Jerusalem" at this time. And directly after this, we read, that still "the number of the disciples *multiplied* in Jerusalem *greatly*, and a *great company* of the Priests were obedient to the Faith."‡ Again, when St. Paul paid his third visit to Jerusalem, and went in unto James and the Elders, they "said unto him, Thou seest brother *how many thousands* of Jews there are which believe."§ The word here translated thousands is *μυριαδες*, and signifies "myriads" or "TENS OF THOUSANDS," and in Acts xix. 19. it is thus translated. The words are "*αργυριου μυριαδας πεντε*, five myriads—five tens of thousands—fifty thousand pieces of silver." The words in the former passage are "*ποσαι μυριαδες εστιν Ιουδαιων των πεπιστευκοτων*, how many myriads—HOW MANY TENS OF THOUSANDS of Jews there are which believe." Now considering the import of the words "HOW MANY," it may very safely be concluded that there were not less than fifty or sixty thousand believers, and very probably a hundred thousand or more.|| And making every possible allowance, is it possible that there is a man in existence, so utterly destitute of common sense, as to believe that such an immense multitude of persons either did, or

* Acts iv. 4.

† Gill, in loco.

‡ Acts vi. 7.

§ Acts xxi, 20.

|| Vide Appendix.

could assemble in *one* place for the worship of God? Why, surely, my good Sir, this is rather too much for even a Congregational Dissenter to believe! The Holy Spirit, however, has not left us to our own conjectures upon the subject, for the Word of God expressly tells us, that this "*Church* at Jerusalem" did *not* all meet together in *one* place, but that "in *every house* they (the Apostles) ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ;"* and also that they continued "breaking bread from house to house;"† "because" says a learned Dissenter, "their number was so large that *one house* could not hold them, they divided themselves into lesser bodies; and some met and had the ordinance (of the Lord's Supper) administered to them in one house, and some in another."‡ Thus, you see, this able and *honest* Congregational Dissenter has overthrown the whole system of Congregational Dissent as completely as one could wish. No Churchman could possibly have done it more effectually, for he has razed it to its very foundation, without leaving a vestige of it standing. He plainly says, that this Church at Jerusalem was too large to meet together, and, therefore, divided into lesser bodies—Congregations or House-Churches; such as those in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, Nymphas, and Philemon, considered above. And, that not one of these House-Churches at Jerusalem was Independent of the collective Church at Jerusalem, or aggregate of believers we know, because we never read of the plural *Churches*, but only of "the CHURCH at Jerusalem." No truth, therefore, can be more clearly demonstrated, than that the town or district Church at Jerusalem was *not* Congregational, but comprehended within itself, several Congregational or House-Churches. In support of what has been advanced, I may add, though quite unnecessary, the testimony of another honest Dissenter, who speaking of the first Christian Churches says, that "when Christians became too

* Acts v. 42.

† Ibid. ii. 42, 46.

‡ Gill, in loco.

numerous to assemble in one house they branched off, and became new Congregations; * * * but that the Christians so *divided*, for the sake of convenience, continued to maintain a mutual fellowship, having all the officers in common, and the whole forming together but ONE CHURCH. The limits assigned to it, would be the extent of the town or city in which they resided, with *so much of the surrounding neighbourhood*, as would allow of a convenient intercourse."* This Dissenter writes, here and elsewhere, so much like a Churchman, and defends the Church so well, that had he not in his pamphlet, given her a few hearty grins, one might have taken him for a Churchman. So powerful is truth, that even her sworn enemies cannot at all times withstand her!†

* See Remarks upon the present state of the Dissenting interest, with hints for its improvement, &c." p. 37.—This is certainly a capital pamphlet, written by a Dissenter, who is no novice in matters connected with the "Dissenting Interest." I would highly recommend it to every Churchman. One may, however, smile at the idea of "Hints for the IMPROVEMENT of Dissent:" for the improvement of that which is so highly extolled as so excellent—so Scriptural, and so perfect, certainly sounds very oddly.

† Mr. James says, that "when a Church becomes too large to communicate at one table, and divides to eat the Lord's Supper in two distinct Places of Worship, there are two Churches and no longer one only," p. 9.—This is certainly not a Scriptural truth, but a Dissenting tradition. Mr. James has not referred us to a single passage of Scripture in support of such a notion; and for a very obvious reason—he knew of none. We find that "the Church at Jerusalem" was "too large to communicate at one table;" DID divide, "to eat the Lord's Supper" in several "distinct Places of Worship;" and yet there were NOT several distinct Churches but only ONE, "the CHURCH at Jerusalem." But according to Mr. James, and the traditions of Dissent, we ought to read of the CHURCHES at Jerusalem, which, however, we never do. So much for the Word of God being the ONLY rule of faith and practice to Dissenters.

Besides, the Dissenting Church of which I was a member, like most others, was "too large to communicate at one table" and, therefore, always divided "to eat the Lord's Supper," some sitting in one pew and some in another: some in one part of the Meeting-house, and some in another. And as those called "Deacons" and not the Minister always carried the Bread and Wine to the Members, they always received it in the pews in which they happened to be sitting, and NEVER at the table at all. Now, why could not these people have as well received the Lord's Supper in different Meeting-houses, as in different pews? The Meeting-houses, to be sure, might be further distant from each other than the pews—but then, what is the consequence in point of distance? what difference is there in this respect, between a quarter of a mile and a quarter of an inch? Dissenters ought to state particularly the utmost distance at which Members of the same Church may sit from each other, lest peradventure, some of them should, by sad mischance, happen to creep out of the pale of their own Church without knowing it, and be cut off by INADVERTENT excommunication.

I could produce many other proofs, and Scriptural ones too, in corroboration of what has been already advanced; but quite enough has been said to show that your Dissenting system of Congregational Independency is utterly unscriptural and indefensible. *Congregational* Churches I can find in the Word of God, such were those in houses; but who will pledge himself to prove that they were *Independent*? *Independent* Churches I can also find, such as "the Church at Jerusalem," and "the Church of Ephesus;" but dare you even attempt to prove that they were *Congregational*? or in other words, that they consisted of no more than one Congregation? It is not sufficient that you prove that a Church was *Independent*, you must prove that the very same Church was *Congregational* also. And this is an absolute impossibility. I have shown it to be so from Holy Scripture, interpreted even by Dissenting Commentators themselves. And as Congregational Independency is the very foundation upon which your whole system of Dissent is built, and as I have fully proved that it is entirely destitute of either pattern, precedent, or existence in the New Testament, your whole superstructure—your boasted system of Dissent, inevitably falls at once to the earth. Let us, therefore, never hear another word about the Scriptures being your only rule of faith and practice, and about the Scriptural nature of Congregational Independency. If Congregational Independency were to be found in the Word of Truth, how comes it to pass that in a pamphlet published under the sanction of a Dissenting Society, and treating professedly "On the Congregational system,"* *not one single passage is produced from the Sacred Writings in support of that system?*

* No. 15 of the Society for Promoting Ecclesiastical Knowledge. A well and warily written pamphlet; and, considering its source, containing a degree of honesty not to be expected. It is unquestionably one of the most **TEMPERATE** and best composed of the productions of that wretched set of Church-destroyers.

I must repeat that in a pamphlet treating *professedly* "On the Congregational system," NOT ONE SINGLE PASSAGE IS PRODUCED FROM THE WORD OF GOD IN SUPPORT OF THAT SYSTEM—a tacit acknowledgment that there is no such passage, and a proof that the writer knew of none. Yet in this as in every other Dissenting book, it is asserted over, and over, and over again, *usque ad nauseam*, in every variety of phrase, that the Word of God, and that only, is the standard of Congregational Dissent. You surely cannot think of for ever blinding people's eyes to your unscriptural notions, with such empty assertions; for the slightest distinct observation will enable any one to see that your professions and practices are grossly at variance.

I will now just glance at a trick played off by your friend Mr. Scales. After some little of his accustomed puff and bluster, he gives an extract from Dr. Isaac Barrow, insinuating that the opinions of the Learned Doctor, forsooth, and himself, with regard to Congregational Independency, were in perfect unison; whereas any one whose mental eyes are not totally darkened with the *scales* of bigotry, cannot fail to see that every line in the quotation given, is directly opposed to Mr. Scales's own system. The quotation is this, "At first each Church was settled apart under its own Bishop and Presbyters, so as independently and separately to manage its own concerns, each was governed by its head, and had its own laws. Every Bishop as a Prince in his own Church, did act freely according to his will and discretion, with the advice of his Ecclesiastical Senate, and with the consent of his people (the which he did use to consult) without being controllable by, or accountable to, any other, any further than his obligation to uphold the verity of the Christian profession, and to maintain fraternal communion in charity and peace, which neighbouring Churches did require; in which regard, if he were notably peccant, he was liable to be disclaimed by them as no good

Christian, and rejected from communion, together with his Church, if it did adhere to him in his misdemeanors."* So far Mr. Scales's extract from Dr. Barrow. And in comparing this the Doctor's description of a Primitive Church with one of your modern Independent Congregations, where in all conscience can we discover the slightest similarity? The Doctor is writing in opposition to the usurped supremacy of the Pope of Rome, and is shewing, from the example of the first Churches, that the Church of England is and ought to be Independent; for as the Primitive Churches were Independent of each other, so ought the Church of England to be of the Church of Rome; but although the Doctor says the Primitive Churches were Independent, he no where says that they were Congregational, and therefore says just nothing at all to Mr. Scales's purpose. And the production of such a quotation only shews the desperate weakness of Mr. Scales's unscriptural cause, and his consequent poverty of argument. The Church at Jerusalem and the Church of Ephesus were Independent, and so is the Church of England, though no more Congregational than they were. The Church which the Doctor describes was settled apart under its own Bishop and Presbyters, and governed by its own head; but have you a Bishop and Presbyters, or a plurality of Ministers in one Church? You have but one; and so far is he from being a Bishop or Overseer, with his Church under him, that his Church is in fact his Bishop or Overseer with *him* under it. Dr. Barrow says, "Every Bishop, as a Prince in his own Church, did act freely according to his own will and discretion;" but you know, Sir, by mortifying experience, that instead of a Dissenting Minister being as Prince in his own Church, and acting freely according to his own will and discretion, he is, poor fellow, a perfect slave, acting servilely according to the whims and fancies of his spiritual junto;

* Scales, p. 91.

for, as Mr. James laments, "he has no official distinction or authority. He may *flatter* like a sycophant—he may *beg* like a *servant*—he may *woo* like a lover!!! but he is not permitted to enjoin like a ruler—(it would be odd if he was.) His opinion is received with no deference—his person treated with no respect—and in the presence of some of his lay TYRANTS—(really! are these saints?)—if he say any thing at all, it must be somewhat similar to the ancient *soothsayers*, for he is only permitted to peep and mutter from the dust."* "They treat him as if he could feel nothing but blows; they are rude, uncourteous, and churlish."† And who can pity him? for as God has inseparably linked punishment to error even in this world, so such Teachers only partake of those evils that naturally flow from the unscriptural and democratical notions they themselves instil into the minds of the people. But are the people who treat their Ministers thus, "people of God"—"regenerated characters"—"holy persons"—"saints"? We are told so, forsooth. And are those who minister to such people—who are obliged to succumb to the influence of their unholy passions—who truckle to their whims and fancies—and who are reduced to the degrading necessity of being perfect slaves to such "mob-government"—Ministers of the Gospel—servants of Christ? Yes, indeed, if we take their own word for it. But are they not rather the servants of their people?—slaves in the literal sense of the word, and to all intents and purposes men-pleasers? Else why do they "flatter" and "beg" and "woo"? Would such be the case if they were really the servants of Christ, commissioned and armed with authority by him instead of by their people? Certainly not; they "seek to please men;"‡ and are, therefore, *not* "the servants of Christ."

I might pass through the whole of Mr. Scales's quotation from Dr. Barrow; but there is not a man

* James, page 60.

† Ibid, p. 62.

‡ Gal. i. 10.

whose understanding is cultivated in any degree, who will not at once perceive an entire difference between the system of Dr. Barrow and that of Mr. Scales. Indeed, the production of such a quotation, discovers in Mr. Scales either design or ignorance, and the miserable weakness of the system that requires to be thus propped up. If Mr. Scales knew that Dr. Barrow was as much opposed to Congregational Independency on the one hand, as to Popery on the other, his attempt to insinuate that the Doctor acknowledged the rectitude of the Dissenting system, deserves the severest reprobation; and if he did *not* know this, no term is too strong to denounce his ignorance. He has most probably, in producing the extract from Dr. Barrow, played the Jesuit, and endeavoured to insinuate that the learned and worthy Doctor was so ignorant of the Scriptures as to believe the absurdities of Congregational Dissent, and that the Doctor was consequently an advocate of that system; but Mr. Scales has overshoot his mark and outwitted himself—the wise is taken in his own craftiness. How much more honourable would it be at once to abandon a system, which cannot be supported without being obliged to resort to such mean and contemptible expedients! But methinks I hear you softly whisper, but, “Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth,* and were we to forsake it, we should lose all our respectability and distinction, and be obliged to return to our original occupations and drudgery.” This is, I believe, as *disinterested*, and as substantial an argument as you can produce.

Mr. Scales, however, is not the only one in the “Dissenting interest” addicted to disingenuous and crafty tricks. Mr. James is not a whit behind him. This I will endeavour to show by comparing a few passages of the second and fifth editions of his “Church Member’s Guide.” This book, as has been already observed, contains some of the grossest false-

* Acts, xix. 25.

hoods and most shameful slanders against the Church of England any where to be found. The second edition of it having been ably reviewed, and some of the falsehoods and calumnies contained in it refuted in a masterly style, Mr. James so altered the subsequent editions of it, as to make it appear that the Reviewer had neither fairly nor honestly quoted his words. Such, indeed, was the impression I received myself, on comparing a passage quoted by the Reviewer with a subsequent edition of Mr. James's work, to that which the Reviewer had noticed. The first passage I will compare is one already quoted in the early part of this letter. Speaking of the meaning of the word Church, Mr. James says, in his second edition, "It has an enlarged and also a more confined signification in the Word of God." And after describing its enlarged signification, he says, "In its more confined acceptation, it means a Congregation of Professing Christians, meeting for worship in one place; hence we read of the Church at Rome, Colosse, Philippi, &c."* The Reviewer boldly meets this with a flat contradiction, saying, "We *do not read* in the New Testament of the Church at Rome, or of the Church at Colosse, or of the Church at Philippi! The Epistle to the Romans is addressed 'To *all* that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be Saints.' The Epistle to the *Philippians*—'To *all the Saints* in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi;' and the Epistle to the *Colossians*, 'To the Saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse.' So much in quoting Scripture for great precision of language."†

Mr. James felt the force of these pointed remarks, and, therefore, in the subsequent editions of his book he exchanged "the Church at Rome, Colosse, Philippi, &c." for "the Church at Corinth, of the Thessalonians, of Ephesus, &c."‡ I scarcely need remark here, that Mr. James can no more prove "The Church

* James, p. 6. 7.

† Church of England and Dissent, 8vo. p. 37.

‡ James, p. 6, 5th Edition.

at Corinth, of the Thessalonians," or " of Ephesus," to have consisted of no more than a single congregation, than he can " the Church at Rome, Colosse, Philippi, &c." for not one of them is a clear and decisive example of the meaning which he has assigned to the word " Church." The passage ought to read thus : " In its more confined acceptation, it (the word Church) means a Congregation of Professing Christians, meeting for worship in one place ; hence we read of *the Church in the house of Nymphas, of Philemon, and of Aquila and Priscilla*, at Ephesus and at Rome." These are, indeed, the only instances in which the word occurs, as a clear and definite exemplification of the meaning Mr. James has assigned to it ; and it is to be hoped that in the next edition of his work he will make the necessary alteration. *Before*, he *misquoted* Scripture ;—he then, on being shewn his error, altered his quotations. *Now*, he misrepresents Scripture ; and, if he considers *himself* worthy of imitation, he will again, on being now shewn his error, alter his present quotations ; and will very probably get right at last, which is not the good fortune of every one.

But when Mr. James altered the above passage, he ought, by all means, to have altered the one immediately following it ; for an assertion more false was never made. It is this : " These are the only two senses in which the word (Church) is ever employed by the Sacred Writers ; consequently all provincial and national Churches, or in other words, to call the people of a province or nation a Church of Christ, is a most gross perversion of the term, and rendering the kingdom of Jesus more a matter of geography than of religion."* Mr. James would have spoken the most undeniable truth, had he said—" To say that ' these are *the only two senses* in which the word (Church) is ever employed by the Sacred Writers,' ' is a most gross perversion of the term, and rendering the king-

* James, p. 6th, 5th Edition ; and p. 7, 2nd Edition.

dom of Jesus more a matter of *falsehood* than of religion.'” As Mr. James altered the preceding passage, *consistency* imperatively demanded the alteration of this also. It is in vain to say that he was ignorant of its being false;—this he could not be, for the Reviewer had proved it to be so; and the circumstance of Mr. James’s altering the other passage, in consequence of what the Reviewer had said respecting it, proves clearly that he knew that this was wrong also. Indeed, I fearlessly tell him, that he knew, when he altered the other passage, and that he knows now, that his assertion that “These are the only two senses in which the word (Church) is ever employed by the Sacred Writers,” is directly and perfectly false. I challenge him to prove that it is not false. I defy him to reconcile the meaning of the word (Church) in every instance in which it “is ever employed by the Sacred Writers,” to *either* of the meanings which he has assigned to it. Should he make the attempt, I hereby deliberately promise and engage to ravel the whole entirely out. I know he cannot do it, and so he does himself. It may be said, if, then, he knows that his assertion is false, why does he not alter it; for it would be no more *humiliating* for him to alter the one than the other? This is perfectly right, and the only reason why he does not alter it, is simply this—BECAUSE HE DARES NOT. For he knows, that if he admits that the word (Church) *has*, in the Word of God, more than the two significations which he has assigned to it, there is an end at once of his whole system of Congregational Dissent. He might, therefore, just as well put his book into the fire at once, as to alter that false assertion. Those not acquainted with the subject, may not, perhaps, be aware, that upon the meaning of the word (Church), as it is used “by the Sacred Writers,” turns the whole controversy between Churchmen and Congregational Dissenters. If the word be never used in the New Testament, but in the “two senses” which Mr. James has assigned to it, Dissenters are right, and Churchmen are wrong. But if,

on the other hand, the word be ever used in the New Testament in more, or different senses than those two, which Mr. James and Dissenters assign to it, as I have clearly proved in the instances of the Church at Jerusalem, and the Church of Ephesus, and could have proved in several other instances—then it follows that Dissent, and Dissenters, are wrong, and the Church, and Churchmen, right and Scriptural. The reason, therefore, why Mr. James did not make the one alteration, as well as the other, is abundantly obvious.

To notice another of the instances in which Mr. James has humbly bowed to the Reviewer of his book, we read in the second edition : “ The Church of England retains *MANY of the corruptions of her RELATION at Rome.*”* Having altered this sentence thus : “ The Church of England retains *SOME of the corruptions of the CHURCH of Rome,*” Mr. James stands *self-convicted* of having borne false witness against his neighbour. For if he spoke the truth in this instance, in the second edition of his book, why did he afterwards alter it ? The fact speaks for itself.

After the Reviewer has noticed the above reproaches of Mr. James, he thus proceeds :—“ Not satisfied with this lighter mode of sarcastic warfare, our author deliberately advances the most unjust charges against the Established Church. ‘ The Church of England,’ says he, ‘ teaches that *all who die, go to heaven, whatever was their previous character* ?’ To say nothing of the martyrs and reformers of our Church—to say nothing of the generations of holy Churchmen, who, since the reformation have entered into rest, our author not only openly insults every Member of the Establishment, but wantonly charges twelve thousand living Episcopal Clergymen with utter incompetency of understanding, and searedness of conscience. For their understanding must be blunted into perfect dullness, if they do not perceive the palpable inconsis-

* James, p. 146, 2nd Edition, and p. 120, 5th Edition.

tency, and their conscience must be seared into insensibility itself, if they do not feel the tremendous guilt of continuing in a Church which teaches such a horrible doctrine! We wonder how any Christian man could publish any thing so untrue, and so unchristian, as that 'the Church of England teaches that ALL WHO DIE GO TO HEAVEN, WHATEVER WAS THEIR PREVIOUS CHARACTER.' "* This passage thus quoted by the Reviewer, from the second edition of Mr. James's book, is the very passage which led me to think the Reviewer had dealt unfairly and dishonestly by Mr. James;† for by comparing it with a later edition, I find nothing like it. But, behold! in turning some time afterwards to the page referred to by the Reviewer in the *second* edition, I there found the very words. I confess that I felt at once both grieved that I had indulged in hard thoughts of the Reviewer, and indignant at the contemptible trick of Mr. James. Mr. James, however, gains nothing by such conduct, for he thus places himself in the unenviable situation of a *self-convicted* SLANDERER of the Church of England. What are we to think of a man who can deliberately write, print, and publish to the world, that "the Church of England TEACHES, *that all who die go to heaven, whatever was their previous character*"!! What sort of a conscience must that man possess, who can deliberately affirm that the "Church of England TEACHES—that she actually TEACHES—people to believe, that *their characters are of no consequence whatever*; for, *all who die go to heaven, whatever was their previous character*!!" How can such a man, after uttering such a malignant and glaring falsehood

* Church of England and Dissent, 8vo. p. 5.

† It is much to be regretted, that when the review of Mr. James's book was published in the form of a Pamphlet, the author did not, in his Preface, give his numerous readers an intimation of Mr. James's conduct. I cannot but think that he ought to have mentioned it, in justice to himself; for when persons reading his Review, and comparing his quotations with the latter editions of Mr. James's book, find that they do not tally, they will be ready to imagine that he has injured Mr. James, whereas, were the truth known, the very reverse would at once be manifest.

against the Church, ever look at a Churchman, or even at a Church, without blushing with shame!! And, who would not be disgusted, even to nausea, at hearing such a man canting about his "*weak conscience*," his "*tender conscience*!" And who would envy the humiliating situation of such a man, when, for want of proof to substantiate his false assertions, he is obliged to eat his own words, and thus condemn his own shameful conduct.

Mr. James says, in the first and second editions of his book,—“The Church of England teaches that all who die go to heaven, whatever was their previous character.” In the subsequent editions, he says, instead of it,—“her Burial Service, in manifest opposition to some parts of itself, and other parts of the Liturgy, leads us to conclude that all who are interred with the prescribed rites of sepulture, certainly go to heaven, whatever were their previous characters.” If Mr. James had said no more than what was perfectly true, in the first and second editions of his book, why did he alter the subsequent editions? The reason is so obvious, that an answer is quite unnecessary.

I might add other instances in which Mr. James has altered his book, in consequence of the remarks of his talented Reviewer, for even the very preface itself has been curtailed; but enough has been said to show up some of the conduct manifested by Dissenters towards the Established Church. I would indeed by no means have made the above remarks, had Mr. James acted either like a Christian or an honest man, and frankly said in his preface to the third edition of his work, or in some other place, that he had altered, or, “revised and corrected” it. But no, Mr. James has adopted no such a manly, straightforward, and upright course. That would not have suited his *pious* purpose. He has altered his book, and very materially so too, and yet has most dishonestly sent it into the world as a pure transcript of the former editions. And by acting thus jesuitically, and deceitfully, he has left

people to conclude, as I did myself, that the Reviewer has misquoted his words, and misrepresented his meaning. Conduct like this, on the part of Mr. James, is as mean and despicable as some of his assertions are wicked and false. It is craft, indeed, strikingly characteristic of those who use it, and well worthy of the unscriptural and iniquitous system which requires it.

To detect and expose the guile, hypocrisy, and falsehood of such *pious* men—men of such “weak and tender consciences.”

I am, and ever hope to be,

Sir,

Most willingly your obedient Servant,

L. S. E.

LETTER III.

ON THE ELECTION OF MINISTERS BY THE PEOPLE.

SIR,

As one falsehood requires many more to bear it out, so one error also requires many more to support it. Apply this to the subject before us. Congregational Independency may be considered as the fundamental error of your system of Dissent, and the source of all the errors of which that system is composed. For when you have embraced this error as a truth, that every separate and distinct Congregation forms a complete Church of itself, entirely independent of every other, neither recognising, allowing, nor admitting of any foreign control or right of interference whatever, consistency requires you to believe all the errors which flow from, or are consequent upon, that one error. Hence you believe, as a matter of course, that such a Society has an undoubted right to manage all its own affairs, of every description whatever—to make, interpret, and execute its own laws—to admit or reject its own members; and this, according to what mode, and upon what conditions it may itself prescribe for and upon the occasion; and also, to hire, pay, superintend the conduct of, and dismiss its own Ministers, just according to its own will and pleasure. Each one of these errors is essential to the scheme of which it

forms a part; give up one, and like a chain with a broken link, the whole system falls to the ground. Grant that a Congregation has no right to choose its own Minister, and you destroy its Independency: for it is in virtue of its Independency that it claims and exercises that right. This shall form the subject of my immediate consideration.

That the choice and election of their own Spiritual Teachers by the people is quite consistent with Congregational Independency, I acknowledge; but that it is scriptural in any sense of the term I at once deny, and produce your friend, the Dissenting Mr. James, in support of such denial. He honestly confesses, though at the expense of the whole Dissenting system, that "NO CASE OCCURS IN THE INSPIRED HISTORY WHERE IT IS MENTIONED THAT A CHURCH ELECTED ITS PASTOR."* This is certainly true, and coming from a bigotted Dissenting Minister himself, it is decisive of the matter. But how Dissenters can reconcile their continual practice of electing their Teachers with such a confession as this, so as to satisfy their "*tender consciences*," is only known to themselves—it is, of course, a complete mystery to me. And, besides, to reconcile it with your unceasing assertions, that "the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice," will, with all your sophistry, occasion you, I conceive, no little difficulty. One would naturally imagine, that after confessing that the Word of God, your pretended *only* rule of faith and practice, contains not a single precedent to sanction the practice of people electing their own Teachers, you would, in becoming deference to the Word of God, immediately abandon it. I have, indeed, no doubt that if this could be done without abandoning your whole system, you would immediately do so. This, however, cannot be done; you, therefore, tenaciously adhere to it, although you know, and acknowledge it to be entirely without any foundation in the

* James p. 12. Second Edition.

Sacred Scriptures. Nevertheless, in order to set your own consciences at rest, and with a view of satisfying the scruples of those upon whom you are *dependent* for your "bad eminence," you take, as precedents, an occurrence or two recorded in the Scriptures, but which are quite foreign to the subject, and have nothing at all to do with the matter.

Your appeal to the choice of seven men, by the people, in the sixth of the Acts, is perfectly senseless ; you might just as well appeal to the first chapter of Genesis. Had these seven men been chosen by the people, to be their Spiritual Teachers, there would indeed have been some propriety in referring to the circumstance as a precedent for your own practice. But such was not the case ; for their office was not in any respect a spiritual, but a worldly office, and altogether an extraordinary office, which, some suppose to have lasted only while the Christians continued to have all things in common. Their business simply consisted in serving tables ; or, if you like, in impartially managing and distributing the common stock ; and as that was property belonging to the people, it was quite just and right that they should choose whom they might think proper to be the superintendants and stewards of it. The office of these men was to take care of the property of the Church, and to distribute that which had been voluntarily given to the poor, and to those who needed it. And if this office, or any part of it, remains to the present time, it rests upon our Churchwardens and Sidesmen, whose office is certainly of a similar nature, and evidently far more like it than any other office any where in existence. But to infer, that because the people chose these seven men to be the guardians and distributors of their property, they have a right to choose whom they please to be their Spiritual Teachers, in direct opposition to so many instances which occur in the Word of God, of Ministers being otherwise appointed, argues nothing less than a total want of deference and regard to the Word of God, and

a wicked attempt to "reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."* Commandment respecting the qualifications of Ministers was given by God himself through his blessed Apostle to Timothy, a *single individual*, and not to the Churches; but if the choice of Ministers rested with the Churches, or, in other words, with the people, the directions for such a choice should, and most assuredly would, have been given to the people, and not to Timothy. This argument is irrefragable, get over it if you can. The sum of the matter is briefly this: either your notions are utterly false, or the Holy Apostle St. Paul, in sending Epistles to Timothy and Titus, which he ought to have sent to the people, committed a most stupid and inexcusable blunder. Believe which you like.

You also press into your service the appointment of Matthias to the Apostleship, in the place of Judas. But, here again the cases are by no means parallel, even admitting that he was elected by the people, which is by no means so clear as you wish it; for he was not chosen with a view of becoming the stated Minister over them, but to the office of an Apostle. The people assembled on this occasion were the commencement of "The Church at Jerusalem;" of which, we all know, James, the Lord's brother, was the Bishop or stated overseer, and not Matthias. If, therefore, he was elected by the people, they elected him, not for themselves, but for some other Church—not to be their *own* Spiritual Teacher, but to be the Spiritual Teacher of some other Church or people; which, according to your own views, they certainly had no manner of right whatever to do; for it is the very thing to which you are so much opposed. This very choice and appointment, therefore, even granting you that he was elected by the people, (which is all you contend for), so far from being anything at all in your favour, is a most triumphant argument against you.

* Mark, viii. 9.

But, after all, it is by no means clear whether “they,” the people, that is all the Disciples who were then and there assembled; or “they,” the Apostles only; or “they,” the Apostles and seventy disciples together, appointed the two—Joseph and Matthias. Neither does it appear that Matthias was appointed by *election* at all, but by *lot*; and the decision was evidently the Lord’s, and not the people’s. “Thou, Lord, shew whether of these two *thou* hast chosen.”* But, again, admitting, for the sake of argument, that the appointment of the two was by the whole company then present; “the number of the names together were about a hundred and twenty.”† And of these, eleven were Apostles, and seventy others were those seventy Ministers whom our Saviour had sent forth to preach the Gospel, making in all eighty-one Ministers; subtract these from the hundred and twenty, and there are but thirty-nine laymen left, which is not quite one third of the number. As, therefore, there was a majority of Ministers of no less than forty-two, which was more than one third of the whole number, the appointment or election, whichever you may please to term it, may be considered as entirely the election of the Ministers, and not of the people. And in fact, in whatever light we view this occurrence, and that respecting the choice of the seven men erroneously called Deacons, instead of their proving any thing in the way of pattern or precedent in favour of your wicked practice, every particular connected with them is directly opposed to it. And if even we were not expressly informed in the Word of Truth of the way in which Ministers were appointed over the Churches, these circumstances would not afford us the slightest knowledge of the matter. For, as they are not elections or appointments of Ministers over Churches, they have just nothing at all to do with the subject. But we are expressly and distinctly told by the blessed Spirit, if we will but

* Acts, i, 24.

† Acts, i. 15.

believe him, how Ministers were appointed. Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every Church."* St. Paul commanded Titus thus, "ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee."† To Timothy he says "Lay hands suddenly on no man."‡ Here is not a syllable about the people, either as it respects their choosing the Ministers, or of even their being consulted in the business. And if the power of selecting and ordaining Ministers over the Churches was not solely and exclusively vested in Timothy and Titus, the blessed Apostle's commands to them were perfect nonsense. Instead of sending these commands to Timothy and Titus, St. Paul should properly have sent these Epistles to the people, commanding them "TO CHOOSE OR ELECT NO MAN SUDDENLY." For if the right of choosing their Ministers belonged to the people, Timothy had nothing to do with the matter, and needed not to hesitate a moment to "lay hands" on them; all he had to do was, to know positively whether they had been elected by the people or not.

But it is useless to pursue this subject any further as it regards its being Scriptural, for that ought indeed to be considered as entirely out of the question. And the man who can coolly neglect and despise the clear and express declarations and commands of the Holy Ghost, that he may keep his own unholy tradition, must be shamelessly and most awfully perverse, and does not deserve to be reasoned with, but despised. And I am sure, that every real true and pious Christian, feeling it to be his duty and interest to bow humbly and devoutly to the will of his blessed and adorable Redeemer, as revealed in his Holy Word, will reject, with strong feelings of abhorrence, the unhallowed practices of Dissenters, who are forced to confess that "*no case occurs in the Inspired History, where it is mentioned that a Church elected its own Pastor,*" and yet presume, in spite of the convictions of their own consciences, and

* Acts, xiv. 23.

† Titus, i, 5.

‡ 1 Tim., v, 22.

in direct opposition to the Word of God, to continue such ungodly practices. For, unable to support your notion by the Word of God, you appeal to "general principles"—to "analogy"—to "expediency"—or to "reason"—to any thing, in fact, rather than act like honest and conscientious men, and at once abandon so absurd and mischievous a practice.

Moreover, I might produce an additional proof, if it were wanted, that the election of Ministers by the people is unscriptural, from the circumstance, that Dissenters differ among themselves as to the persons "to whom belongs the right of voting in the election of a Minister."* Mr. James says, "on the mode of electing them to their office, the Scripture is sufficiently explicit."† And yet this very same Mr. James says in another place "on this point, the practices of our Churches are so MULTIFORM, that if we are asked for the general rule of Dissenters, we *must reply that they HAVE NONE!!!*"‡ Have none! What! Have no rule! when on this subject "*the Scripture is sufficiently explicit!!*" No rule! and yet everlastingly reiterate that "*the Scripture is your rule, and your only rule!!*" Why really how can you satisfy your "tender consciences;" for Mr. James tells you expressly that "the Scripture is sufficiently explicit" on this subject? Will you ever again have the face to assert that "the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice?" Yes, Sir, it seems that you will. Again, and again, and again—a thousand times over have you reiterated that false assertion. Mr. James is obliged to confess that on the manner of electing Ministers, "the practices of Dissenting Churches are so *multiform*," that is, that the ways in which Dissenting Churches elect their Ministers are very numerous, though on *the way* of electing them "the Scriptures are sufficiently explicit." These numerous ways cannot surely all be the right and *explicit* way of the

* James, 214.

† James, 11.

‡ James, 214.

Scriptures. Notwithstanding, each Church will, of course, declare that the Scriptures are its only rule, and that its own way, though widely different from all others, is the only Scriptural way. "Amongst some," says Mr. James, "the *right* of appointment is with *Trustees*. (Where is the Scripture for Trustees?) Amongst others he says, that "another *custom*" prevails, "the admission of *Subscribers* who are *not Members*, to the elective franchise." "In some cases the Subscribers and Members vote *together*, in others, they both vote, but in *separate* bodies." In some instances only the male Members vote, in others both male and female. In some cases also, "the founders of the Congregation" "elect the Minister," and this before "a Church is formed." In short, the ways are almost as numerous and as various as the whims and fancies of those who practise them; yet each individual will tell you that his own peculiar way is the Scriptural one, and all seem ready to declare that they have "weak" and very "tender consciences," and that they are very pious and holy men: so that you are driven, however, as you have so repeatedly been, from the Scriptures of Truth, and sensible of your miserable weakness in that quarter, you appeal to "reason;" and argue that a person has as good a right to choose his Spiritual Teacher as to choose his servant, physician, or lawyer. But this I deny; there is no comparison; for Ministers of the Gospel are not the servants of men at all, but the Servants of God; from him they receive their commission, office, and authority, and to him *alone* they are amenable for their use: they make of them, and not to their people. They are not employed by their people, and are not their servants; they are employed by God for the benefit of his people, and are *his* servants. They ought to be highly esteemed and revered by their people, not for their own sakes, they are but earthen vessels, but for God's sake, and their work's sake; and are not to be slaves to their people, nor subject to them in any sense whatever.

They are no where commanded to obey their people ; but on the contrary, their people are expressly and unconditionally commanded to obey them. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," is the unbending command of Him who hath said, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me."* Now, as nothing of this kind is said of servants, physicians, or lawyers, and as people are no where commanded to obey their servants, physicians, or lawyers, to compare the Ministers of the Gospel, the Servants of the Most High God, to them, is ridiculously absurd, and wickedly profane. It is comparing sacred things with profane, and by lowering the Minister of Christ, in comparing him with a servant or slave, you cast indignity on an office which is of God's own appointment, and through the office on God himself.

If a servant, physician, or lawyer, is chosen or employed by any person, he is bound to please that person ; he has no one else to please ; no third party is at all concerned, nor has, therefore, any right to interfere. And if any man is chosen or elected by any set of men to minister to them, he is absolutely bound as a matter of *common honesty* to please those men ; they are in every sense of the word his masters, and not God. To them he owes his obedience ; he has no right to obey any other, for he cannot honestly "serve two masters ;" but let not such a man call himself the Servant of God, for such he assuredly cannot be ; he has driven a bargain with them to serve them for so much per annum, and to them *alone* he is amenable for the doctrines which he preaches, and for all his actions. He stands, according to your argument, in the same relation to them as a servant, physician, or lawyer ; if, therefore, he does not please them, they have the very same right to discharge him as they have a servant, physician, or lawyer ; no third party has any right to interfere. For him to tell them that he preaches the Gospel,

* Luke x. 16.

and in strict accordance with the Word of God, is nothing at all to the purpose, for *they*, and not he, are to be the judges of that; and you need not be informed that they will *really* be the judges, and indeed so they ought to be, according to your own principles. As, therefore, Dissenting Ministers acknowledge themselves to stand in the same relation to their people as servants do to their masters, they ought to please them, and do please them, at least they endeavour to do so, and are consequently every man of them MEN-PLEASERS—the servants of men, and not the Servants of God. The great and noble-minded Apostle, and faithful Servant of God, says, “do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

That Dissenting Ministers do “seek to please men,”*—are men-pleasers to all intents and purposes, is clear and evident from the way in which they obtain their places, and the means they make use of to *let* themselves. When a meeting-house is vacant, the Minister who wishes to supply the vacancy, preaches on probation or trial generally about three months, to give the people an opportunity of judging whether his abilities, preachments, manners, and services are likely to be worth their money or not, before they hire him; and should he be so fortunate as to succeed in his attempts to please them during that time, he is elected to the *office* of pleasing them at so much a-year; and thus becomes a perpetual man-pleaser, and, consequently, like all such Ministers, he can “not be the Servant of Christ;” but, in the strictest sense, the servant of those who employ him. He is their “*hireling*,” they hire him and pay him his wages, and he is in *duty* bound, as an honest man, to please them; they *have* a right to expect him to do so; and in case he *does* not please them, they have a right to pay him *his* wages and discharge him at once, and hire another who will please them. I could mention an instance in

* Galatians, i. 10.

which the truth of these remarks was fully exemplified. The preacher, immediately on leaving the pulpit, was met in the vestry, and told that his services were no longer required in that place; his wages were there and then immediately paid, and he was told in amount, if not in the same words, to go about his business, which he, though reluctantly, was obliged to do, to make way for another hireling. And it is worthy of remark, that the very gentleman who paid the hireling off, disgusted with Dissent, has become a staunch and consistent Churchman. Besides, Sir, you know that Dissenting Teachers are really the slaves of their people by mortifying experience; for I well recollect, that on the occasion of one of your Members speaking to you in terms of disapprobation of the doctrine contained in one of your sermons, you exclaimed apparently in great perplexity, "What am I to do! some say that I preach too high (Calvinism), and others, that I preach too low, I really do not know what to do!" Your perplexity arose from your having in your Congregation, as is the case in almost every other Dissenting Congregation, two parties, one pretty high in Calvinism, and the other very low; with the former you agreed in doctrine, but in the latter party, which was much the greater, you had an officer, a monied, influential, and overbearing man, whom Mr. James calls an "Lord Deacon," "the Bible of the Minister, the Patron of the Living, and the Wolf of the Flock;" and by him, as the head of his party, you were known to be led. He was really to you "the Patron of the Living;" for by this influence entirely you obtained the situation, and by considering him as your "Bible," you retained it with its appendage of nearly three hundred pounds per annum; certainly no trifle, and amply sufficient to cause anxiety of mind; although useless, for the only alternative for Dissenting Teachers is, either the loss of their salaries, or submission to their masters. Where, then, is the *independence* you boast of? Are you not the most *dependent* creatures in

existence? And where are your consciences, your "tender consciences?" Let a Dissenting Minister only act and preach according to the dictates of his own conscience, and if that should happen to be in any wise different from the commonly received opinions or fancies of his people, whether it be different from the Word of God or not, for that is out of the question, and he will immediately be unrelentingly harassed, and rendered as miserable as possible; and should he not be "pliant as an osier," he will, by some craft or other—some jesuitical, sly, mean trick or other, be turned out of his situation. He must either submit or depart; and, should he depart, the same fate awaits him in another situation. This, Dissenting Ministers well know, they, therefore, generally submit, and thus become the most abject slaves in existence. But what man, capable of understanding and enjoying true freedom, true liberty of conscience, either would or could submit to such slavery—the worst of all slavery—the slavery of the mind and conscience, shackled down as yours are, by the fetters of your petty democracies, and to the thralldom of your "mob-government." Whilst, however, you teach people notions that are not only in direct contradiction to the numerous passages of Holy Writ, which command people to obey them that have the rule over them, and to submit themselves, but subversive of the whole fabric of Christianity, obey you must, and obey you ought.

Moreover, to argue that a man has the same right to choose his Spiritual Teacher as to choose his servant, physician, or lawyer, is not only unscriptural but absurd, for the cases are in no respect similar. A person may be quite capable of judging as to the latter, but not to the former; persons are sufficiently alive with regard to their temporal interests, but quite the reverse with regard to their spiritual welfare: and Dissenters themselves, on other occasions, would use this very argument as a most palpable and undeniable truth. If all men speak well of a servant, physician, or lawyer,

it is a very good criterion, and a person may then very safely employ him; but if he choose a Spiritual Teacher by the same rule, he will be sure to have a bad one, for Christ says to his Blessed Apostles, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the *false* prophets."*

Mr. Scales, alluding to the choice of the seven men by the people, as related in the sixth of Acts, says, "if the people were allowed this liberty in the appointment of those who were to distribute their bounty, much more ought they to enjoy such a privilege in the election of those who were to have the care of their souls."† This is just as sensible as to say, that if a person is allowed the liberty of choosing a man to take care of his hogs, much more ought he to enjoy such a privilege in the election of a person to take care of his soul. We know that as it regards a man's temporal affairs, he is at perfect liberty to entrust the management of them to whomsoever he pleases; and on the other hand, we know that he is *not* at liberty to choose what Spiritual Teachers he pleases. As to whether persons "OUGHT to enjoy such a privilege" or not, that is a quarrel with Mr. Scales has with the great Head of the Church and not with any of her Members. One thing we know, and that is—that if Christ had allowed such a liberty, the first Christians would not only have enjoyed it but exercised it, which we *know* they did *not*. Mr. James is witness "*no case occurs in the inspired history where it is mentioned that a Church elected its pastor.*" This is strictly true, and since it is a Dissenter who affirms it, and since Dissenters so repeatedly declare that "the inspired history" is their only rule, it ought at once to be decisive with them. The whole matter lies in a nut-shell—we no where read of Churches electing their own Teachers, but we *do read* of St. Paul's appointing Ministers over the Churches, without any election at all on the part of the

* Luke, vi. 26.

† Scales, 112.

people, and without even consulting their conflicting passions ; and we know that the Apostle commanded Timothy and Titus to act in the very same manner. And although Mr. Scales must, we cannot but think, know all this perfectly well, he has yet presumed to assert that the right of people to elect their own Ministers, is "an important privilege which the Head of the Church himself conferred, which his Apostles cheerfully sanctioned, and his first Disciples uniformly enjoyed."* This is nothing else but sheer empty declamation — mere assertion, incapable, as I fear Mr. Scales well knew, of one shadow of proof ; and, therefore, most shamefully and most dreadfully dangerous trifling with the Holy Writings. It is, indeed, such a gross mis-statement of what was done by our Blessed Redeemer and Head, and by his Holy Apostles, as has scarcely if ever been excelled in the perversions at Rome. And awful must be his state who has thus presumptuously dared to utter as God's Word, that which is not therein found. Let Mr. Scales read Prov. xxx. 6, and learn at length to blush and be silent. Where was his "tender conscience," when he thus so positively asserted what he *knows* is no where to be found in any part of either the Old or the New Testament ? and what he knows to be flatly contradicted by Dissenters themselves, even by his "eloquent Friend," the Dissenting Mr. James, who declares as above, that "no case occurs in the inspired history where it is mentioned that a Church elected its pastor ?" Instead of barely asserting that the election of Ministers by the people is "an important privilege which the Head of the Church himself conferred, which his Apostles cheerfully sanctioned, and his first Disciples uniformly enjoyed," why has he not supported such assertions by Scriptural proof ? why has he not produced a "Thus saith the Lord" for them ? He might then have expected credence. He may "beguile the

* Scales, 113.

unstable," but all Christians, and those accustomed to think for themselves, will certainly pay more deference to the Sacred Scriptures, than to his *ipse dixits*. Let him shew us the book, the chapter, and the verse, where the Holy Ghost has said that Christ conferred, or his Apostles sanctioned, or the first Disciples enjoyed such a privilege, and we will bow with all humility and reverence to the decisions of Eternal Truth. Why has he not, in proof of his assertions, produced passages from his pretended "only rule of faith" the Word of God? Just because he cannot—because he knows of no such passages to produce. And yet he can for ever ring in our ears that the Word of God—the Word of God is his only rule of faith and practice. It is, however, evident that the religion of the Hottentot may just as easily be found in the Word of God, as the notions of a Congregational Independent Dissenter.

But I will now proceed to glance at some of the evils which naturally result from the election of Ministers by the people, and which may, therefore, be considered as no mean argument against that practice independent of its being unscriptural. And as Dissenters themselves have furnished abundant matter for my purpose, I shall avail myself of it; and the more readily, because I cannot thus be suspected of partiality. When a Minister is removed, says Mr. James, "the choice of a successor *always* brings on a *crisis* in the history of the Church, of which he was the pastor. *No event* that could happen, can place the interests of the Society *in greater peril*. DISTRACTION and DIVISION have SO FREQUENTLY *resulted* from this circumstance; so MANY Churches have been rent by it, that an argument has been founded upon it, if not against the right of popular election to the pastoral office, yet against the expediency of using it. It *must be admitted*, that on these occasions our *principles* as Dissenters, and our *practices* as Christians, have *not* been *unfrequently* brought into disrepute. We have been accused of *wrangling* about a Teacher of religion, till

we have lost our religion itself *in the affray*, and the state of MANY of our Congregations proves that the charge is not altogether *without foundation*.* “The feeling of *too many of our Members* may be thus summarily expressed, ‘I will have my way.’ Such a spirit is the source of all the evils to which our Churches are *ever* exposed, and of which it must be confessed they are but *too frequently the miserable victims*.”† At this perilous “crisis” “secret canvassing,”‡ “mean petty arts,” “cabal and intrigue,”§ and “the most disgusting exercise of the most disgusting tyranny,”|| take place between the opposing parties. “If the two parties cannot *unite* in peace, let them at least *separate* in peace. Alas! that this should so RARELY be the case.** “In some cases a division is *necessary*,” and then, “how *much ill-will* and *anti-christian* feeling, * * what envies and jealousies, and evil speakings commence and continue.”†† Thus far, Mr. James, and the questions which naturally force themselves upon our minds, are these—can these people really be what they pretend to be—holy, pious and peaceable men, saints of the Most High, holier persons than their unpretending neighbours? Can that God, who “is not the author of confusion, but of peace,”‡‡ “be the author of a system productive of little else *but* confusion? We read in the Word of God, of many Ministers being appointed by the Apostles and by others, but do we read that any of those appointments ever produced or were preceded by *secret canvassing, mean petty arts, cabals, intrigues, wrangling, distractions, divisions, envyings, jealousies, ill-will, evil speakings, and ANTI-CHRISTIAN* feelings? Nothing of the kind. What, then, is the inevitable conclusion? Simply, that the Dissenting mode of appointing Ministers by popular election, and that adopted by the Apostles, are widely different from each other.

* James, 223.

† Ibid. 229.

†† James, 232.

‡ James, 233.

§ Ibid. 231.

‡ James, 228.

** Ibid. 233.

‡‡ I. Cor. xiv. 33.

To proceed, I again adopt the language of a Dissenting Teacher, one of the most violent and bitterest opponents of the Established Church; one who, judging from the rancour and malignity of his speeches on some occasions, would be glad to hurl the Church and all connected with her, to the very bottom of the ocean, I mean Mr. T. Binney. "The power of choosing a Minister, produces a feeling *unfavourable to religious result*, (does such a power come from God, then?) as it leads all in some degree to listen rather *as judges than disciples*. At certain periods, this is essential, but in the minds of many, the feeling frequently continues; it is too congenial to the dominant propensity of human nature to be readily relinquished; hence *often a variety of evils*; hence the *rude remarks*, the vulgar impertinence of some of all ranks and both sexes; hence the *general custom* of regarding *how* a thing is said rather than the thing itself, though the most momentous perhaps within the compass of thought. With the consciousness of a Minister as 'their servant *for Christ's sake*,' many are disposed to think him such *for their own*, and to occasion *disorder* by unreasonable demands on his time, attention, and docility (!!)

The freedom from priestly domination, laid as the basis of the system, will excite at times such a feeling of independence, as will expand into something like *popular tyranny*. *Sensitive to encroachment*, some will discover it where none was designed, and oppose themselves to the *moral* authority of virtue and wisdom; and others, or the same, from the like principle, will seem to think it *inconsistent with liberty to bow even to truth itself*."* "The supreme object of the Ministry in relation to the Church, is to augment in the character of its Members, the 'glory that excelleth.' But the tendency of many modern mistakes, is to destroy the *very being and action of the office altogether*. In the same persons, there is often

* See Binney's Life of Morell, p. 295.

to be found such a disastrous combination of absurdities as lead in their legitimate operation to the *positive silence* of an Evangelical Preacher. If you preach to saints as you *ought* to preach, they are dissatisfied; if you preach to sinners, they are dissatisfied; angels do not require your instructions; and to preach to devils, if it were possible, would only excite still stronger animosity; so that as a benevolent intelligence, anxious to exert your faculties in promoting the knowledge and improvement of others, you are deprived by this sect of determined dissatisfactionists,—the *pest and scourge of many a Church*—of every sphere of active agency, and in fact *virtually driven out of all the known worlds of the intelligent universe.*”* “A young man has been observed to receive from a Church a flattering reception, and to settle under circumstances of peculiar encouragement. The people have formed a high opinion of his talents, and a higher of his piety. In the course of a year or two all is altered—the promise of his early services is not fulfilled—the feelings of the people change; some, whose admiration at first arose almost to enthusiasm, become now perhaps the most cool or *contemptuous*; the man lingers on for a time amidst growing dissatisfaction, till at length he either quits a sphere which he finds himself no longer adequate to fill, or is borne, with a strange mixture of emotion in the breast of survivors, to the last and universal refuge of humanity, ‘*where the slave is free from his master, and where the weary are at rest.*’”†

This is really a most lamentable picture, but a faithful and true picture. It is drawn by a bigotted Dissenter, who of course would not utter a syllable too much for fear of endangering “the *good cause.*” This man, when describing the theory of his system, can talk very fluently about its beauty and excellency; but when he speaks of the practical working of it, which is that by

† See Binney’s *Life of Morell*, p. 253.—† *Ibid.* p. 222.

which a system is best known, he alters his tone, and describes it in a way sufficient to cause any Christian or man of sense to hate it with the most perfect hatred. If contending with a Churchman, he would laud the *Independency* of a Dissenting Teacher in the most glowing language; but when writing *to and for Dissenters*, he describes him as the veriest "slave" in existence. And he describes him truly, for if that man be a slave who is servilely bound to act according to the will or fancy of a single individual, what must he be who is bound to please so many masters? Is he not in the most degrading situation? And although we know it to be the will of God that error should lead to its own punishment, and that Dissenting Ministers, by inculcating errors which produce them, are the authors of their own sufferings, we cannot but pity them, not only on account of their degraded situation, but also because they are so deluded as to propagate such unscriptural and wicked errors. Nor are the cases solitary in which Dissenting Teachers suffer under the results of their own bad system; they are of frequent occurrence in almost every part of the kingdom. The respectable Editor of the British Magazine writes, "that in *one neighbourhood* he has seen four very remarkable instances of oppression exercised by the people on their Ministers; one of them so excessive as to call forth the very strongest representations from the most respectable Dissenting Ministers, accompanied by a declaration of doubt whether any respectable Minister would become connected with the congregation in future; and one where the circumstances alluded to were followed by a long illness, which the friends of the sufferer conceived to arise from mental suffering, and which ended in death." The Editor then adds, "the last month's country papers contained a notice of a Farewell Sermon from a Dissenting Minister at Chelmsford, before his going to another charge, in which he stated that he was driven

I have myself known several instances of the like description, which I would certainly mention here did my limits permit. I now reside in a secluded part of the country, where Dissenting Meeting-houses are extremely scarce; I know indeed but of four Independent Meeting-houses within many miles of where I am now writing. From one of them the Minister, in the liberty of his "tender conscience," ran away with another woman, leaving his own wife and children behind him, and has never been heard of since, and the Meeting-house has been shut up ever since, except till very lately. In reference to a second of the four, there has, within the last year and a-half, been a most disgraceful quarrel between the Minister and some of his people, including one of his Deacons, who was also a Trustee of the Meeting-house. The Deacon declared the Teacher was a drunkard—that he had been drunk at the Deacon's own house, as well as in other places. Immediately on hearing that the Deacon had set such a report on foot, the Teacher called a special "Church Meeting," and after delivering himself of a very fine oration in justification of his own conduct, and furnishing the members with black and white balls, with which to determine the fate of their Deacon, he took the sense of the meeting by means of "the ballot," and excommunicated the Deacon, though I may add very unjustly, for I have myself undeniable evidence of the drunkenness of the Teacher. With regard to a third of these Meeting-houses, there is at present existing a quarrel between the Teacher and some of his people, the particulars of which I have not heard with sufficient accuracy to enable me to state them. And in the fourth, there has been a dispute for about two years between the Minister and his people. But this is likely soon to be brought to a termination; the Mi-

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nister has resigned his office, owing to illness, brought on, it is said, entirely by the unhappy circumstances in which he and his Church are placed. And his state of health is such that he is likely soon to be carried "to the last and universal refuge of humanity, *where the slave is free from his master, and where the weary are at rest.*"*

Sometimes, however, the matter is otherwise, and the Minister, on a party rising up in his Church against him, will not lay it so much to heart, but resolves to resist the petty tyrants, and to keep the pulpit in spite of all their efforts to the contrary. When this is the case, the most disgraceful proceedings take place; the locks are knocked off the Meeting-house doors by each party successively, and the pulpit occupied sometimes by the one party and sometimes by the other; and even fighting is sometimes resorted to, and the pretended Saints become literally a Church militant. As an illustration of the truth of this, from many which might be added, take the following from the Newspapers of the day:—

"On the last day of the late Assizes at Lewes, an indictment was tried, the King *v.* Jenner and others, arising out of a riot in a Dissenting Meeting-house at Alfreston, in the County of Sussex. It appeared that a Chapel had been built by subscription thirty years ago, at Alfreston, the Lay and Clerical affairs of which were managed by Church Meetings. It appeared that the Rev. Mr. Betts had been shepherd of this flock for nineteen years, when the Deacon contrived to raise a cabal against Mr. Betts, who was at last deprived of his office by a large majority at one of the Church Meetings. His successor, who appeared in Court, was an

* Since the above was written, I have been accused of partiality, in not alluding to another Meeting-house, which is quite as near me as some of the four, and which furnishes a case "WORSE THAN ALL OF THEM." But the fact is, I did not know of its existence when I mentioned the four; and had I been aware of it, I know not that I should have alluded to it; for to mention, or even to allude to all the numerous cases of the kind which Dissenters, in the plenitude of their purity supply, would be an almost endless task.

old simple man, who had been a day-labourer, and at last a receiver of the toll at a turnpike-gate. To this successor Mr. Betts did not choose to resign the comfortable pulpit which he had filled for nineteen years, and accordingly, on the Sabbath on which the Rev. Mr. Sands was to do duty, Mr. Betts provided himself with a peace-officer, by whose staff of office he hoped to retain possession of his cure of souls; the other party, however, were not "chickens" in an affray, and they procured a number of sturdy countrymen in smock frocks, whose fists appeared, by the evidence, to have told heavily against their opponents, whom one witness termed the 'Philistines.' The battle for the pulpit, raged with great violence for some time; Mr. Betts first lost the pulpit, but Parson Sands could not long maintain his victory, and Parson Betts at last won and kept the velvet cushion. According to the witnesses, the bloody noses, broken skins, and torn clothes, were very awful. Several witnesses declared, that Brother Freeloze and Brother Tugwell distinguished themselves in the fray, and one old woman trampled upon a fallen foe, and waved a bottle of rum over him. The battle lasted for a considerable time, until the Bettites drove the Sandites from the temple; nor could Parson Sands be tempted to renew the conflict. It was contended that Parson Sands had been legally inducted into his office, and that Parson Betts, in resisting his assumption of power *vi et armis*, had committed a breach of the peace; on this ground Parson Betts, and twelve other Bettites were indicted. The whole of the parties were acquitted of the riot, two of them found guilty of an assault and held to bail. The case kept the court in a *roar of laughter* for several hours, and terminated the assizes for Sussex."*

The *Christian Advocate* of May 19, 1834, contains the following statement:—

"Yesterday morning (Sunday) a scene most dis-

* Wakefield Journal, Jan. 6, 1832.

graceful to the Chief Actors, and most derogatory to the honour of the Christian Church, was enacted in the Tabernacle, Moorfields. We shall state the facts of the case as fully as our present information will enable us, leaving our readers to form their own judgment concerning it.

“The late venerable Matthew Wilks was the Pastor of the Churches and Congregations assembling at the Tabernacles in Tottenham-court-road and Moorfields. About five years ago, his great age and increasing infirmities forbidding the hope that his life could be much further prolonged, it became expedient to provide a successor. Both he and the Churches and Congregations agreed that it was desirable that Mr. Campbell should succeed him; but that gentleman shrunk from the responsibility, and his consent could not be procured. At length, however, he yielded to what appeared the call of Providence. When the intelligence was communicated to Mr. Wilks, the venerable Minister exclaimed, ‘Thank God, thank God, thank God!’ These, too, were the last words which he uttered; for his emancipation from earth was drawing nigh, and in three hours afterwards he breathed his last.

“From that time to the present, Mr. Campbell has continued to be the sole Pastor of the Churches and Congregations; and his labours, with the exception of a few of his hearers, have given universal and complete satisfaction. The discontented party, though small, was inveterate; and by the introduction of Trustees, to whom Mr. Campbell objected, and one of whom was not even a Member of either Church, but had lent the actual Trustees two thousand pounds, they have, for a certain extent, accomplished their object, which was to get rid of Mr. Campbell. Their opposition to him appears, so far as we can learn, to have arisen chiefly from two causes—the fidelity of his ministrations, and his remonstrances against the close-corporation manner in which the general affairs were conducted.

“About six weeks ago, Mr. Campbell had occasion

to visit Scotland. During his absence he heard that the actual Trustees were proceeding to fill up a new trust-deed with the names of the very individuals to whom he had objected. It appears that the effect of the alteration would have been to change the constitution which existed, according to which he held his appointment from a class of persons called the Managers, whose authority as such the new trust-deed went to supersede. He, therefore, wrote to the Managers, informing them that if the deed were executed as above, his connexion with them must entirely cease; and that on his return he should give them due notice, and acquaint the Congregations with the reasons why he was about to leave them. Instead of receiving a reply from the Managers, he received the following:—

“Rev. and Dear Sir,—After serious and careful consideration of your letter, we do not hesitate to apprise you of our determination to adhere to our present constitution, and that we must, therefore, accept your unexpected resignation, notwithstanding the high respect we cordially feel for your talents, piety, and zeal; and we remain, with most devout wishes for your health and welfare,

“Your’s, very sincerely,

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| “B. ARNOLD, | “S. MORGAN, |
| “W. BALL, | “B. NOYES, |
| “W. FLETCHER, | “M. PRIOR, |
| “J. HEMBROW, | “A. WHITE, |
| “J. HENDERSON, | “J. WILKS.” |
| “GEORGE JACKSON, | |

“These are the names of the old and new Trustees, with but one exception; namely, Mr. Bateman (brother-in-law of the present Bishop of Calcutta), the attached friend of Mr. Campbell.

“From this document it appears that the deed, as mentioned, had been executed, and that Mr. Campbell’s opponents were determined to take advantage of him. At this, probably, he was not surprised; but he was surprised to find his letter construed into an actual resignation, and lost no time in protesting against the construction which had been put upon it. It was he

who wished "adherence" to the constitution, and to prevent its violation. He maintained that he had tendered no resignation, but had only asked a question, the simple answer to which would have guided his subsequent proceedings. But, instead of being answered by Managers alone, to whom alone he had addressed himself, he was answered by Trustees and Managers conjointly, one of whom he had left in a state of separation from the fellowship of the Society, and another of whom he had never even seen. One of the conditions, too, on which he had announced his intention of tendering his resignation (for this was all he did), was, if the Managers as a body, and "*without exception*," should agree to the change proposed by his opponents; so that, had he even tendered his resignation, the act would have been rendered null by the fact that "exceptions" did exist.

"Finding that those who had sought to expel him under the mask of resignation were determined to proceed accordingly, Mr. Campbell informed his friends that he was resolved to stand upon his right, and not submit to such unceremonious treatment. He, therefore, gave directions that he should be announced to preach at the Tabernacle, in Moorfields, yesterday morning, and in the mean time returned to town.

"During the week several Prayer-meetings were held on his account, and in other Meetings convened by his friends, who comprise at least three-fourths of the Congregation, it was resolved that if he should be prevented from officiating according to appointment, they would immediately leave the Chapel.

"At a quarter before ten, yesterday morning, (three quarters of an hour before the time of commencing the service,) the *soi-disant* Trustees assembled, and put the Rev. Mr. Mulley, of Mark's-gate, into the pulpit, and the Clerk into the desk, they themselves, with John Wilks, Esq., M.P., at their head, taking their station at the bottom of the pulpit stairs. At the usual hour the Congregation assembled, and were

evidently much disappointed to find a stranger in the pulpit. Mr. Bateman, as the friend of Mr. Campbell, proceeded to the pulpit to serve Mr. Mulley with a written notice to the effect, that Mr. Campbell was there and ready to do his duty. Mr. Campbell then presented himself, but was immediately repelled by the Trustees, and it appeared that if he had attempted to ascend the pulpit, they would have given him in charge to some policemen, who, under the orders of an attorney (Mr. Wilks's son) and his two clerks, were in attendance in the vestry. Upon this, he turned to Mr. Wilks, and said, 'If your father were here, Sir, would he not weep?' Mr. Selby, who is one of Mr. Campbell's principal friends, expostulated with Mr. Wilks, who answered that he could not help it; that, if Mr. Campbell had any legal claim, he might assert it; things must take their course. In the meantime Mr. Campbell withdrew, and, having disrobed himself, took his seat in the body of the Chapel.

"The conflict now began. The Clerk attempted to give out the hymn; Mr. Mulley attempted to preach; but the Congregation, exasperated on perceiving that their chosen Pastor had been refused admission to his own pulpit, drowned the voices of both parson and clerk by their reiterated cries of 'Shame, shame!'—'Down with Mulley!'—'We will have Mr. Campbell, and no one else!' and other expressions of a similar tendency, intermingled with groans and hisses. This unhallowed scene continued for a considerable time; and in the midst of it Mr. Campbell, who preserved the calmest demeanour, was led out between two of his supporters. In the meantime the Trustees had separated to their respective seats; and a gentleman, who sat immediately behind Mr. Wilks (and who, we are informed, was the Rev. Dr. Henderson, of Highbury College,) audibly accosted the Honourable Member, asking him twice over 'if he called

that Protestant Liberty,' and then, expressing his disgust, immediately left the Chapel.

"Mr. Bateman came forward, and exhorted the Congregation to retire in peace; for, if not, the Trustees would employ force. With the exception of a very small number, those who were present obeyed this suggestion, and retired, some remaining in the yard to discuss the events of the morning, and the rest proceeding to other places of worship. The uproar was such as to defy our powers of description, and the females were so terrified that they fainted away on every side.

"We understand that the demands of Mr. Campbell and his friends are, that the Trustees shall be chosen annually by the Members in Society,—that they shall render an annual account of the state of the funds,—and that the appointment of the Minister shall be vested in the people. Mr. Campbell intends to continue to demand the pulpit, and to sue the Managers, at the expiration of the quarter; when, we presume, the matter will be referred to a Court of Law, if it do not, in the mean time, become the subject of a slower process in Chancery. Thus has the peace of two of the largest Congregations in London been, we fear, irremediably disturbed, by the assertion of a power which Churchmen will wonder to find exercised in a Dissenting Congregation, and that, too, by the *honorary* Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty! We believe that the whole of this account is substantially correct."*

* THE LATE MOORFIELDS UPROAR, AND J. WILKS, ESQ., M.P.—Is this the voluntary system or is it not? If NOT, who are the leading voluntaries? Here we have a most disgusting exhibition in a place set apart for Divine Worship—an exhibition that would bring discredit upon a pot-house—men bellowing, women fainting—the hymn of praise drowned in a hiss—human passion silencing the accents of devotion—the vulgar ejaculation, like an honourable bray in the House of Commons, interpolating "Oh, oh," to the words of prayer and penitence—and the whole scene more like the pit of a theatre than a temple dedicated to God; where the sighs of the wounded in spirit are the incense, and humility the symbol of contrition; even there coarseness and brutality—lawyers' clerks and indignant partizans mingle their voices as if at Greenwich fair, where

These are excellent specimens of some of the excellent proceedings resulting from the excellent system of Congregational Independency, but particularly from that excellent feature of it,—popular election. This is the system, too, which we are told is founded upon the Scriptures, and these are the people of “tender consciences,” and who tell us that the Word of God is their only rule of faith and practice. Can such pretended Churches be Churches of Christ? Are such people the Servants of Christ? Are they not rather slaves to their own depraved passions? Can any person imagine that that system is of God, which, if followed out, leads in its “*legitimate operation to the positive silence of an Evangelical Preacher?*” Can that system be of God, which, if followed out, leads in its “legitimate operation,” to the positive breach of that command, “go ye into all the world and *preach* the Gospel?” If it be of God, I ask again, shew us the parts of Scripture upon which it is founded—produce clear and express passages—passages to the point from the Word of God. Bring forth your strong reasons from that Holy Book, and they shall have that respect and humble deference which they deserve. But that is impossible, you know you cannot bring forward one single, clear, unequivocal text in support of Congregational Dissent—not one in support of the election of Ministers by the people; the whole system, in all its bearings, is founded not upon the rock of God’s Word, but entirely upon the sand of human passions; and therefore it will not---it cannot stand: like other erroneous systems, which have long since bid the world good night, it may last for a time, and only for a time, it has no

liquor and licentiousness are equally abundant. If we can draw from the above very painful and disgraceful scene any instruction, it amounts to this, viz., that without a governing power Chapels would become as great nuisances as beer-shops. There was no act of homicide committed here as in an Irish riot. Mental agony was inflicted, but no lives were lost. The sensitive were astounded—the devout were horrified—the casual spectator was disgusted—the profane were amused—the mere world-worshipper laughed. What cared the passer by, or the really pious, for the conflicting pretensions of Mr. Campbell and Mr. Mulley? It was a revolting spectacle altogether.—LIVERPOOL STANDARD.

principle of perpetuity about it. Many systems of religion have been invented by human reason, but never one so ridiculously foolish as yours; it is truly "a rope of sand;" it has not in it that principle of cohesiveness, without which no society, whether religious or political, can possibly hold together. It is founded in direct opposition to everything like unity. And no better could have been intentionally devised for the express purpose of counteracting the mediation of Christ, when, in behalf of *all* his disciples, he prays, "*That they all may be one.*"* There is little doubt that Satan, the first Dissenter, did intentionally act with this view in setting it on foot, for he is the father of all heresy, schism, and discord. In short, the sinful notions, that every man has a right to choose his own Minister, and to worship God as he pleases, or not to worship him at all if he prefers it, are three propositions on which Infidelity is firmly based; they are destructive of all Christian worship and union, and consequently destructive of Christianity itself. Such a system, therefore, must be most dreadfully, and most dangerously wrong. And that it is so, I will in my next, endeavour to show, even from the testimony of Dissenters themselves. In the mean time,

I am Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

L. S. E.

* John, xvii. v. 21.

LETTER IV.

ON THE PRESENT STATE AND UNSCRIPTURAL
NATURE OF DISSENT, AS SHEWN BY DIS-
SENTERS THEMSELVES.

SIR,

I now proceed to shew as briefly as possible, and from the writings of Dissenters themselves, that your system of Congregational Independency is in a far different state, both as to its purity and prosperity, from what you wish to be generally believed. I do believe that the Jesuits have little more artifice to palliate the frauds of the Infallible Chair, than Dissenters have to disguise the errors and proceedings of the Conventicle. In Dissenting works, designed for more general reading, Dissent is extolled as the very pattern of purity and excellency, and as in a state of prosperity and glory; but in some other works, designed particularly and expressly for Dissenters, a very widely different tone is adopted; the truth then comes out--- Dissent is then confessed to be in any thing but a flourishing condition, and every Dissenter is most earnestly exhorted, and almost commanded, to do his utmost in the employment of talents, time, and money, (the main spring of all,) to uphold "the Cause," and support the "Interest." The warmest and most intelligent friends of Dissent, and even some of its most

bigotted adherents, begin now, however, to discover and to acknowledge that Independency is fraught with many and great evils. They deeply feel, and bitterly lament, its numerous distractions and divisions. They groan under their baneful effects; they see them destroying the glory of "the Cause," and are anxiously desirous of applying a remedy; but they find it impossible; they see that the evils of the system flow naturally from the system itself, and admit of no possible cure without destroying the cause of the evils—the system itself. And many of the ablest of the Dissenters strenuously plead for the immediate and total abandonment of it, in hopes that some of the materials of which the "Interest" is at present composed, might be rendered useful in giving weight to a more substantial and a more *sensible* system. But of this their hopes are vain: for the notions of democracy have taken such deep root in the minds of their people, that they will never submit to any order or authority, or to the least encroachment upon what they have been so foolishly taught to consider their just rights. Some propose that the whole body of Non-conformists throughout the kingdom should form themselves into a sort of "consolidated union." Others advise county or district associations, or unions; but all to no purpose; for the question is, and ever will be how are they to be "*consolidated*?"—How are they to be *united*?—How are they to be *bound* together?—All attempts to bind together a set of people who are ever taught that individually they have perfect liberty to do as they like, and are under no obligation whatever to attend to the dicta or advice of any mortal in existence, any further than it may please themselves, must ever be fruitless and vain. The people, I know of a surety, are most scrupulously jealous of the slightest appearance of domination on the part of their Teachers; and should they even be courted into some kind of a union, they know it is merely *voluntary*, and will consequently be united no longer than matters go on to please them, which is in reality just no union at all.

I know the feelings of the people in reference to such matters. In case some could be persuaded to something advantageous to "the Cause," others would immediately oppose it, if it were for nothing else but to shew themselves great men, and to give vent to the natural pride of the human heart. The "Interest," therefore, must be left to its inevitable and well-deserved fate. In spite of all your most arduous efforts in endeavouring to rally your forces and to keep them steady, "the Cause" will still continue to grow worse and worse. And knowing as I do that its foundation is laid in error, and that it is built up and supported by envy, misrepresentation, and falsehood, and therefore dangerous to immortal souls, I heartily rejoice at its declining state. Yes, that very system, upon the pretended scriptural nature of which "eternal changes have been rung," and which has been puffed off as being so particularly under the favour and blessing of God, is absolutely withering under his curse. Hence arise such numerous and such loud complaints from Dissenters themselves on all hands, especially from the Eclectic Review, the Baptist and Congregational Magazines, the chief organs of Dissent. "Many of the evils growing out of the Congregational system," says a Dissenting Writer, "are felt and acknowledged by the most enlightened of its supporters."* This same Dissenter, in another place, earnestly exhorting his brethren to abandon their unscriptural system," says, "THAT THE SYSTEM DOES NOT WORK WELL. *The experience of two centuries has brought it to a sufficient test, and placed us in a position the most undesirable to a well ordered mind.*† Had a Churchman said this, he would have been accused of falsehood, and misrepresentation, and ignorance, and I know not what. But they are the words of a Dissenter, and he tells us honestly that his "SYSTEM DOES NOT WORK WELL."

* "See Remarks upon the present state of the Dissenting Interest, &c" p. 10.

† Remarks, &c. p. 9.

Can such a system, I ask, then, be of God? Would He set a system on foot, which He knew would “*not work well?*” And is this the system, which we are so repeatedly told is so *pure* and *Scriptural?*” Can Dissenters for a moment expect Churchmen to be so foolish as to embrace or adopt a system which really “*does not work well?*” Besides, we hear something about “*the experience of two centuries*”—that is, that your system of Dissent has existed *only* “*two centuries,*” and that you, therefore, have only “*the experience of two centuries,*” which is all perfectly true: but if said by a Churchman, it would have been scandalously false, and we should have heard perpetual reiterations, that your system is as old as Christianity itself. But, my good Sir, just tell us where your system was to be found till within about two hundred years ago? Where was it before the days of your father and founder, Robert Brown; after whom you are frequently and properly called Brownists? My good Sir, do not make yourselves so ridiculous as to ask Churchmen to abandon the system of their father and founder, Jesus Christ, after whom they are called Christians, for a silly system, hatched by a mere man, and one of character not the most moral. Do not ask Churchmen to abandon the system which has had “*the experience*” of *eighteen centuries*, and which has ever worked well, for a new fangled system which has had “*the experience of two centuries*” only, and which “*does not work well.*” Tell us no more of the antiquity or primitive origin of Congregationalism---we know it has had “*the experience*” of only “*two centuries.*” Tell us no more about the purity and excellency of your Dissenting system; we know it “*does not work well,*” and, therefore will have nothing to do with it.

A Dissenting Minister also tells us that “Dissenting Churches need reform.”* And when we recollect that

* See two Letters by Fiat Justitia, p. 53. This Fiat Justitia is a Dissenting Minister, a very wily animal, a crafty fellow, a sort of “Protestant Jesuit.” Some people, however, can READ his pamphlet. Will this good man tell us what his REAL design was in writing it?

the Eclectic Review says, that "We have Old Sarum and Gatton Churches amongst us," *we may very safely believe him. It is very true, "Dissenting Churches need reform," and I hope it will be an "efficient reform," "a radical reform." And if *all* the "corrupt and rotten" Dissenting Churches be properly reformed, they will never require to be afterwards reformed. It seems, however, very curious that "Dissenting Churches" should "need reform," when we are told that they are *now* quite *Scriptural*---that they are "*already purified*." The Eclectic Review, alluding to Dissenting "Churches not having within themselves what is necessary for their own government, and yet standing up not only for independence, but for the self-rule of a pure democracy," indignantly asks, "Who could bestow the name of 'republic' upon a mere club, political or ecclesiastical? Of this *spurious Congregationalism*---this *ultra-independency*, it may truly be said, that it wholly wants a principle of adhesiveness---that its *tendency is almost to infinite divisibility*. Such a Church is a *polypus* which may be divided again and again, and as often as the separation takes place, puts forth a head and becomes an individual performing the various offices of the species." "The multiplication of societies by division---the *propagation of Dissentism by slips*---the raising of Congregations by *architectural forcing glasses, called Chapels*---all this may be very proper, and the system may work well in many instances, but this is no more the Congregational polity of our forefathers."† No, Mr. Eclectic Reviewer, those men were not as one of your brethren well observes, "the patrons of such disorder," and "were they now to land upon our shores, they would find themselves in a strange country, and feel but little sympathy for a Cause that has so strangely deteriorated."‡ Here is a very bright picture of the *purity* of Dissent, and of the excellency of Dissenting principles, and all the pure

* 1831, p. 429.

† Sept. 1831.

‡ Remarks, &c. p. 7.

result of those principles. The Eclectic Reviewer may find fault with the Churches to which he alludes, for departing from the principles of Dissent, but he ought to shew them in what they are inconsistent with those principles. I deny that they are at all inconsistent with them ; but I affirm that he is himself grossly inconsistent with his own principles *when he finds fault with them* : for if it be right for every Church to be perfectly independent of all extraneous control, and for every man, or every set of men, to choose their own Teacher, and so on, what business has he with them—what right has he to blame them, or to wish to domineer and lord it over them—or to impose in any sense his own opinions upon them ? According to the principles of Dissent, they have a perfect right to do as they like, without the remotest interference of any one ; let the Reviewer shew to the contrary if he can. They have just as much right to lay claim, and just as good a claim to *purity* as he has. And undoubtedly all these “*spurious Congregational Churches* ;” these “*ultra-Independent Churches* ;” these “*Polypus Churches* ;” these “*slips of Dissenterism* ;” these “*Congregations raised by architectural forcing glasses* ; will tell us that the Word of God is their only rule, and that they are perfectly Scriptural and pure. It is at the same time perfectly true, that their “*tendency is almost to infinite divisibility* ;” but this is the natural tendency, not of a few Independent Churches, but of every one of them. Division is the natural tendency of the principles of Dissent—the natural tendency of those principles is, to that which is directly opposed to the multitude of passages of Scripture which command unity, and forbid division. In such a corrupt state, indeed, is the cause of Dissent, that a Dissenter declares that “*To attempt its purification amidst the discordant elements of which it is composed, seems almost a hopeless undertaking*,” it is now “*deseccrated by folly in so many disguises*.”* This is plain speaking,

* Remarks, &c. p. 7.

but it was not intended for Churchmen, but for Dissenters only. It tells us, however, distinctly enough, that your system of Dissent is so dreadfully corrupt, that it is almost beyond the possibility of purification. And yet, I presume, it will be reiterated that it is Scriptural, pure, and excellent. Every Churchman, after reading such statements as this, cannot fail to feel abundantly satisfied with his own Primitive and Apostolical Church; for even admitting it to be as corrupt as Dissenters so falsely represent it, he will conclude that he may just as well belong to one corrupt system as another. Besides, even Dissenters will not say that what they call the evils of the Church, are inherent in the system, but simply "abuses" of it. Whereas they honestly confess that the evils of Dissent are inherent in the system—as a Dissenter says, they are "*evils growing out of the Congregational system.*"* The same writer remarks, "*a serious evil, growing out of the democratical system of the present day, is the frequent divisions in Congregations.*"† This, surely, is no sign of the purity of that system. "Alas! Alas!" laments Mr. James, "*how many of our Churches presents at this moment the sad spectacle of a house divided against itself.*"‡ Of course, such Churches as they are mis-called, cannot stand; and the sooner all such democratical clubs tumble to pieces the better, for in numerous instances, to say nothing of religion, they are disgraceful in a moral point of view. And even after a separation has taken place, it not unfrequently happens that the two opposing parties hate each other so cordially, as not to hold the slightest intercourse. "What ill-will" says Mr. James, "is often produced between the two Societies. How much *anti-christian* feeling is excited; how it injures the spirit of both parties: what envies, and jealousies, and evil-speakings commence and continue, to the injury of religion and the triumph of its enemies."§

* Remarks, &c. p. 10.

† James, p. 249.

+ Ibid. p. 24.

‡ Ibid. p. 332.

Thus do we see the potsherds of the earth, striving with the potsherds of the earth, and dashing themselves to pieces and accelerating the downfall of their iniquitous system. "Under this *levelling* system" says an afore-mentioned Dissenter, "the worst passions are often concealed beneath the garb of religion. Concealed, indeed, they are only to (the people) themselves: for they sometimes break out with ungoverned fury, exhibiting a low-minded pride that would furnish an admirable picture of the mock-heroic."* Mr. S. Morell, a Dissenting Teacher, writes thus, "really during the time of my residence at Andover I saw and felt so much of the evil of a vulgar democracy, that it almost made me disaffected to the system. It is much easier to find fault with others, *than to construct a good theory* for yourself; this I am bound in justice to admit, and every honest and impartial Dissenter will unite with me in saying—that our *system* is not devoid of *practical mischief*, however beautiful it looks in theory."† Mr. Morell here speaks of "*constructing theories*" of Church Government, from which I suppose we may conclude that his "*theory*" of Church Government was not "*constructed*" by God, and is not to be found in the New Testament. Churchmen, however, do not conceive that they have the authority "*to construct a good theory*" for themselves, neither do they desire it; they are perfectly satisfied with the theory constructed for them by their Heavenly Master, and revealed to them in his Holy Word, and there exemplified by practice. But I suppose, whatever theory Mr. Morell might construct, he would father it upon the Word of God in some way or other. The very circumstance, however, that his "*system* is not devoid of *practical mischief*," is an infallible proof that it is not of God, but constructed by man.

A Dissenter, before quoted, says, that the very "genius of Independency is hostile to those connecting

* Remarks, p. 21.

† Binney's Life of Morell, p. 279.

links which are essential to good government." Another demonstrative proof that it is not of God, and has no Scriptural foundation. "*Separate interests*," he continues, "*feeble energies, and discordant operations*, are amongst the consequences *inseparable* from an *Eccelesiastical democracy*, which becomes responsible for all the *ignorance, vulgarity, and disorder*, that may be associated with the *system*;"* and that is certainly no small share, enough at least to mar its *boasted purity*. The Eclectic Reviewer, complaining lustily of the dominance of the fatal-spirit of inveterate and incurable sectarianism, and dreading that it will work the extinction of his Dissenting Societies, says, "*our Dissent is itself fraught with Dissent*, and breaks and breaks again into distinct masses, as often as any excitement, local or general, puts the body in motion."† The generally bad and hopeless state of the "*Dissenting Interest*," together with its desperate and incurable evils, seems sometimes almost too much for the patience of this Reviewer, for in one place he tells Dissenters, "that those whose own home is infested with so *fatal* a mischief as a dominant and contumacious spirit of discord, should first employ all their diligence in attempting its removal, before they look over the fences to mark the errors of their neighbours."‡ This is a very broad hint, and capital doctrine, and downright good and wholesome advice, which Dissenters would do well to take. It is just telling them to cure their own desperate evils, before they look beyond themselves to mark the errors of, and find fault with, the Church. But such advice comes with very bad grace from the same Review which tells Dissenters, on another occasion, that "*pure attachment to Dissenting principles, requires to be kept up in minds of a certain class by a keen hatred, and now and then a little round abuse of the Church.*"§ No doubt the man who wrote this infamous sentence, would have us believe that the Word of God is his only rule of

* Remarks, p. 12.

† Eclectic Rev., Sep. 1831, p. 192.

‡ Eclectic Rev. Sep. 1831, p. 193.

§ Ibid. 1832, p. 144.

faith and practice, and that he has a very "tender conscience." Where is the passage of God's most Holy Word which authorizes him to uphold your wicked and corrupt system, by a *keen hatred* and abuse of the Church? Can we suppose that the blessings of the Most High can rest upon a system upheld by such vile means. Talk of the purity of Dissent forsooth, the more it is examined and reflected upon, the more anti-scriptural and iniquitous it will appear.

Notwithstanding the enmity of the Eclectic Reviewer against the Church, it is really amusing to find him, when bitterly lamenting the great evil of schism as existing amongst Dissenters, (if any one can tell how that is possible,) urging on them the duty of counter-acting the spirit of discord and division which have so materially impaired the efficiency of their own system;* but this is nothing less than urging on Dissenters the duty of stopping the progress of their own principles; for, banish the spirit of division or schism, and Dissent at once ceases to exist. In truth, the same wicked spirit by which you are deluded, and induced to Dissent from our truly Scriptural and Apostolic Church, likewise induces you to Dissent from one another. You cannot possibly find fault with those who Dissent from you, without condemning yourselves for Dissenting from the Church. For Dissenters to talk about the great evil of schism is absurd and ridiculous in the extreme; for, if it be right for every man to choose his own Spiritual Teacher, how can it be wrong for him to do so? How can it possibly be wrong for him to Dissent from, and to refuse to hear, a Dissenting Teacher of whom he does not approve, and against whom he may possibly have voted at the time the Teacher was chosen Minister of the Church of which he is a Member? You inconsistently wish people to believe, that it is perfectly right to Dissent from the Church, but quite wrong to Dissent from Dissent;

* See Eccl. Rev. Feb. 1832, p. 133.

but you neither can nor ever will succeed, for to your grievous mortification they fight you with your own weapons; they use the very arguments against yourselves which you have taught them to use against the Church, and you cannot blame them consistently with your own principles.

I am quite aware that it is a popular argument with Dissenters, that if they commit the sin of schism in separating from the Church of England, the Church of England has done the very same in separating from the Church of Rome. In accordance with this notion Mr. James says, that "if separation be schism, Churchmen set us the example in their own conduct, and by seceding from the Church of Rome taught us the lawfulness of dissenting from the Church of England."* Dissenters are extremely anxious that this view of the matter should be quite correct, in order that by representing the Church as in the same state with themselves, they may, if not cover, at least palliate the sin of schism, of which they are guilty in dissenting from the Church of England. And, if in writing the passage just quoted, Mr. James had no qualms of conscience as to the sin of schism, he was most culpably ignorant of the whole business, so much so as not to know whether what he was writing be true or not; for nothing in the world can be more illogical and absurd in every possible view of the case. And let the matter be as it may, and whether what Mr. James says be in any sense correct or not, Dissenters are assuredly equally guilty of the great evil of schism,—they cannot clear themselves of it. This I will endeavour to prove, and I wish my time and limits allowed me to do it as fully as I should like. In the first place, I deny, without the slightest fear of effectual contradiction, that the Church of England did either divide, dissent, separate, or secede from the Church of Rome at all, in any sense of the terms whatever. It is too generally thought that

* James, p. 239.

Christianity had no existence in this country previously to the time of St. Augustine, whom Gregory the Great, then Pope of Rome, sent into this country to propagate the Christian faith. And this idea forms the basis of an argument used in support of the notion, that the Roman Catholic was the first form of the Christian religion introduced into this country ; and that at the glorious Reformation the Church of England separated or Dissented from the Church of Rome. But all this is as far from the truth as the poles from each other ; for Christianity existed in Britain hundreds of years before St. Augustine set his foot into the country. Every one knows that Pelagius, the father of the Pelagian heresy, was a native of Britain, and lived two hundred years before the arrival of the Popish missionary. The great historian Hume, speaking of the distraction which existed in the civil affairs of the Britons, sometime previously to the Saxon invasion, says, “ To this disunion of counsels, were also added the disputes of theology ; and the disciples of Pelagius, who was himself a native of Britain, having increased to a *great multitude*, gave alarm to the *Clergy*, who seem to have been more intent on suppressing them than on opposing the public enemy.”* And when describing the savage cruelties exercised by the Saxon invaders upon the native Britons, he remarks, that “ the BISHOPS and nobility shared the fate of the vulgar.” He afterwards says, when introducing the mission of St. Augustine to the idolatrous Saxons, that “ The constant hostilities which the Saxons maintained against the Britons, would naturally indispose them for receiving the Christian faith, when preached to them by such inveterate enemies ; and perhaps the Britons, as is objected to them by Gildas and Bede, were not over fond of communicating to their cruel invaders the doctrine of eternal life and salvation.” Hume also mentions a battle which was fought at Chester between the Saxons and

* Hist. of England, Chap. 1.

the native Britons, at which were present twelve hundred and fifty British Monks from a large monastery at Bangor, which contained no less than two thousand one hundred, who there maintained themselves by their own labour. Twelve hundred of the monks who were present at the battle, not fighting, but praying for the success of their fellow Britons against the cruel Saxons, were barbarously slain, and the monastery afterwards taken and demolished by the invaders.

Thus it is evident that a Christian Church existed in Britain long before the times of St. Augustine, entirely independent of the See of Rome. Indeed, St Augustine did not come into this country with a view of converting the native Britons, for they were already Christians, and in possession of a purer faith than that which he had imported from Rome ; but for the express purpose of converting the idolatrous Saxons to Christianity, who had invaded the country, and driven the native Christian Britons into the remoter parts of the Island. Besides, there is very strong proof that the Primitive British Church did not originally spring from the Church of Rome at all, for the British Christians had observances and customs quite different from those introduced from Rome amongst the Saxons by St. Augustine and his followers. And a controversy was kept up between the two Churches—the Romish Priests and their Saxon Disciples on the one hand, and the British Clergy and their Brethren on the other hand, for more than a century, and such was their animosity, that they refused all communion together. The British Clergy, supported by the Scottish, pleaded the *antiquity* of their usages, and the Romish Clergy, and their Disciples the Saxons, insisted on the *universality* of theirs. The Britons, of course, would not submit, for they did not acknowledge, and never had acknowledged, the slightest subordination to the Roman Pontiff, but had ever conducted all Ecclesiastical Government by their own domestic synods and councils ; whilst the Saxons, receiving their religion from Roman

Monks, were taught at the same time a profound reverence for that See, and were naturally led to regard it as the capital of their religion. And new reliques perpetually sent from that endless mint of superstition and imposture, and magnified by lying miracles invented in Convents, operated so powerfully on the astonished minds of the multitude, that the Pope, encouraged by such blindness and submission on the part of the people, advanced every day in his encroachments on the independence of the English Churches—that is, the Saxon Church and the Primitive British Church, which became in the course of time both incorporated by the gradual prevalence of the Romish ritual over the British. And so it was that in process of time the Romish Bishop *usurped* the most absolute sovereignty over the whole Church of England. His usurpation, was, indeed strenuously opposed by the Government of the country, in Church and State, and vigorous laws were enacted, but they ultimately proved ineffectual.*

But at length it pleased God, in the course of his Providence, to bring about the glorious Reformation of the Church of England; but in order to this it was necessary that she should cast off the usurped supremacy of the Pope of Rome, and resume her former independence: This she did, and in virtue of her independence set about the great work of purifying herself from all the false doctrines and corruptions which had been unjustly imposed upon her by the usurped power of the Church of Rome. Our pious and venerable Reformers in whom Churchmen so justly glory, were not as Dissenters diligently endeavour to inculcate, the *founders*, but merely the *Reformers*, the purifiers of the Church. She was the very same Church after the Reformation as she was before; just as a man is the very same person after he has washed his face as he was before. The Church of England, at the Reformation, did not undergo any alteration in any thing

* See the First Chapter of Hume's History of England.

that was essential to her existence as a Church. The Reformers merely cleared away the rubbish of Popery which was obstructing her utility, and obscuring her glory, and restored her to her pristine purity and perfection; and thus left her to us, their children, a rich and glorious inheritance. As our Church is constituted according to the Apostolic model, (as will hereafter be shown,) and as our Bishops and Clergy have been regularly and properly ordained by the laying on of the hands of those who received their commission and authority in a direct and unbroken line of succession from the Apostles and our Lord; she is a true Branch of the "one Catholic* and Apostolic Church," the old true Church of England, a Church which traces her origin to the Apostles and to our Blessed Lord as her founder: for "there is not a Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, amongst us, who cannot if he please, trace his own spiritual descent from St. Peter, or St. Paul." The assertion, therefore, that at the Reformation the Church of England became schismatical is perfectly false, and made by Dissenters merely to cover *their* schismatical conduct, well-knowing *that they can only trace their own origin to some popular preacher of late years*. The Church of England cannot with truth be said to have either separated, seceded, or dissented, from the Church of Rome, in any sense of the term; and, consequently she affords no precedent at all for the conduct of modern schismatics. She merely shook off the papal yoke, and resumed that independence which she originally enjoyed, and to which, as a true branch of the Catholic Church, she had a most just and undoubted right. If there was any separation

* By the Catholic Church I do not mean an amalgamation of all those sects and parties which pretend to the Christian name—the word CATHOLIC was never used in such a sense but to DISTINGUISH the true Church FROM all the various sects of schismatics, NOT TO INCLUDE THEM. They have no connexion with the Catholic or Universal Church of Christ at all, if they have let them show us that connexion, let them point out to us the connecting link. If regular and unbroken succession and ordination be not the connecting link, the bond of union to the Universal Church, let them shew us what is.

or schism in the matter, it lay with the Roman Catholics of *this country*, and not with the Church; for as the Church of England is just as much a CHURCH in every sense of the word as the Church of Rome, she has full authority to demand obedience from all persons professing Christianity within her jurisdiction, the Roman Catholics, not excepted. The *English* Roman Catholics, therefore, in refusing obedience to the Church of England, and separating from her, and sending to Rome for Priests to teach them separately in every respect from the Church, are certainly guilty of the sin of schism, so far at least as the Church of England is concerned.

But, granting Mr. James, for the sake of argument, that the Church of England did at the Reformation secede or dissent from the Church of Rome, in the strict sense of the term, will the Dissenters for a moment presume to say that they have as great cause for separating from the Church of England as the Church of England had for separating from the Church of Rome? Certainly they will not. For whilst the Church of Rome is so abominably corrupt as to render the salvation of men (to speak on such a solemn subject with the greatest deliberation and care) at least highly dangerous, Dissenters themselves confess that "The Church of England professes the LIFE-GIVING DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL, favours every great principle rescued from Rome by the Reformers, and puts into the lips of the people a language of devotion unrivalled in majesty, beauty, propriety, and comprehension."* The cases, therefore, are as different as possible; and, consequently, admitting that the Church of England did separate from the Church of Rome, that separation forms no precedent whatever for the conduct of Dissenters separating from the Church of England. No man has a right to separate from a Church, whilst he can obtain salvation in that Church. In

this respect there is no cause to separate from the Church of England, which, Dissenters being witnesses, "professes the LIFE-GIVING doctrines of the Gospel." And as, therefore, Mr. James himself says that "*causeless* separation is the *essence* of schism," he himself stands fully condemned. It is vain for conscience to step in here, because a man's conscience is not to be the rule of God's Church, nor will it be the rule by which God will judge him, but his own Word.

But, to take another view of the subject, surely Dissenters, in some of their more sober moments, will allow that at least the Church of England has as much claim to be considered a Church of Christ as a Dissenting Congregation. If, then, (as Mr. James says it is,) it be "schism to form two Dissenting Churches out of one,"* it must be schism to separate from the Church of England.

But further, Mr. James says, "if separation be schism, Churchmen set us the example in their own conduct." That separation *is* schism there can be no doubt; and if the Church of England commits the sin of schism in separating from the Church of Rome,—supposing for a moment that she does so,—Dissenters, as they separate from the Church of Rome as well as Churchmen, must be equally guilty; and the commission of the sin on the part of the Church of England by no means justifies them.

Moreover, if we examine the writings of Dissenters themselves, we shall find schism, or Dissent (which is the same thing), represented by them as a sin of the first magnitude, and denounced in the most unqualified language—denounced, indeed, as nothing less than apostacy from religion—"a renunciation of God and Christ." In the twenty-sixth number of the Tracts of the Dissenting Society, established for "pulling down the Church," there is the following striking quotation from Calvin's Institutes:—"Where the Word

* James, 126.

is heard with reverence, and the Sacraments are not neglected, there we discover, while that is the case, an appearance of the Church, which is liable to no suspicion or uncertainty, of which no one can safely *despise the authority, or reject the admonitions, or resist the counsels, or slight the censures, much less separate from it, and break up its unity.* For so highly does the Lord esteem the communion of his Church, that he considers every one as *a traitor and apostate from religion*, who perversely withdraws himself from any Christian Society which preserves the true Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. He commends the authority of the Church, in such a manner as to account every violation of it an infringement of his own. For it is not a trivial circumstance that the Church is called 'the house of God, the pillar and ground of truth.' For in these words Paul signifies, that, in order to keep the truth of God from being lost in the world, the Church is its faithful guardian; because it has been the will of God, by the Ministry of the Church, to preserve the pure preaching of his Word, and to manifest himself as our affectionate Father, while he nourishes us with spiritual food, and provides all things conducive to our salvation. Nor is it small praise, that the Church is chosen and separated by Christ to be his spouse, 'not having spot or wrinkle,' to be 'his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' Hence it follows, that *a departure from the Church is a renunciation of God and Christ.* And such a *criminal dissension* is so much the more to be avoided, because while we *endeavour, as far as lies in our power, to destroy the truth of God, we deserve to be crushed with the most powerful thunders of his wrath.* Nor is it possible to imagine a more *atrocious crime* than that *sacrilegious perfidy* which violates the conjugal relation that the only begotten Son of God has condescended to form with us."

Thus ends the Dissenting quotation. It contains very strong language, but by every word of it, strong

as it is, Dissenters stand self-condemned. For if it be really true, as they themselves confess it is, that "*the Church of England professes the life-giving doctrines of the Gospel, favours every great principle rescued from Rome by the Reformers,*" &c., the legitimate—the inevitable consequence is, according to their own showing, that every one who does "*despise the authority, or reject the admonitions, or resist the counsels, or slight the censures, much less separate from it, and break up its unity,*" is "*a traitor and apostate from religion ;*" in other words, that Dissent is "*a criminal dissension*"—an "*atrocious crime*"—"sacrilegious perfidy"—and, being "*a departure from the Church, is a renunciation of God and Christ,*" and those who are guilty of it, seeing they "*endeavour, as far as lies in their power, to destroy the truth of God, deserve to be crushed with the most powerful thunders of his wrath.*" Such, Dissenters themselves confess, are the dreadful but deserved consequences of Dissent. And to escape them, they must either deny that the Church of England is what they say she is, or that schism or Dissent is the "*atrocious crime*" which they represent it to be. Thus, they are in a dilemma, from which they will find it no small difficulty to extricate themselves.

Viewed, therefore, in what light soever they may, Dissenters are schismatics in every sense of the word ; they cannot be made out to be otherwise. And, with regard to the notion that the Reformation of the Church affords a precedent for the schism of Dissenters, it is ridiculously absurd, and the mind of that man who can discover the slightest similarity in the two cases, must be in a most pitiable state. In short, every sect of professing Christians whatever, whether Episcopal or otherwise, whose origin is of later date than the days of the Apostles, and who have not derived their Ecclesiastical Government and authority in and through a regular and uninterrupted channel from the Apostles, and through them from Christ himself, the foundation

of his Church, and the fountain of all power and authority to it, are, and must be, schismatics, if not heretics. They cannot be branches of the *ONE* true, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, founded by Christ himself; they have no union with the original stock, and can, therefore, receive no sap from it; they are without root, and must, therefore, wither and die. They are *sects*—pieces *cut* off, and like twigs *cut* off from a tree, they may *look* green for awhile, but only for awhile; for being *cut* off from the trunk, and without connection with it and the root, they can no longer receive sap therefrom,—they are destitute of that nourishment which can alone preserve them; they are destitute of the Apostolic seed which God has destined to be the preservation of his Church, they consequently gradually wither and die away. Of the truth of this, the Dissenters of this country, as well as those destitute of the Apostolic seed in other countries, afford at the present moment a most striking example—an example which ought to operate as a powerful and instructive warning to every Christian of the present day. Let us take a review of the Churches abroad, which, at the Reformation, overlooking Scriptural Truth, disregarded that Apostolicity to which our National Church so wisely adhered, and how shall we find them? At first they looked flourishing and green, but how are they now; are they not withered and dead? And is not the poison of Unitarianism, or semi-infidelity, corroding even their withered substance? And what is the state of Dissent in this country; where are all the old Non-conformist Churches which once looked so flourishing and green? The Eclectic Review* tells us, that out of two hundred and fifty-eight old Non-conformist Churches, no less than two hundred and thirty-five of them are now withered and dead—now Unitarian or Socinian. And what are the remaining twenty-three but mere “fossils of society?”

* Eclectic Rev. Feb. 1832, p. 109.

And look at the state of the Independent Societies at the present moment; are they not, as a Dissenter justly remarks, "in a position the most undesirable to a well-ordered mind."* There are, to be sure, some exceptions, but then what guarantee is there for their continuing in their present state? The death or removal of a Minister, and many other circumstances which may occur, may throw the whole into confusion, discord, uproar, and division, and be the means of their withering and decay. Indeed the very principles of Dissent are averse to every thing like permanency and perpetuity, and are *necessarily* productive of schism; and if fully acted upon by every one who holds them, or pretends to hold them, they would destroy all Christian communion and worship, and eventually Christianity itself; such a system, therefore, cannot possibly be of God. Whereas, on the other hand, the Church is so constituted in its very nature as to promote union and its own endurance; it is in truth the permanent system which God has ordained and hitherto preserved for the accomplishment of his great and glorious work. And it really appears to me, that the all-wise Being, in order that men may see and know that his blessing does not accompany schism, permits divisions and heresies, and every other calamity to fall on those who have departed from the paths which he has appointed.

Many persons imagine, that if they do but make a profession of religion, and adhere to some one of the numerous systems now in existence, it is a matter of no consequence which system that may happen to be; and if they can but imagine at the same time that the infinitely wise God has given us in his Holy Word the outlines of several different systems *contradictory* of one another, they may certainly think themselves not far wrong. It requires, however, but very little reflection to discover that such ideas are most preposterous; being not only contrary to the whole tenor of the Word of

* Remarks, &c. p. 9.

God, where we find but *one consistent harmonious* system of Church Government, but contrary also to the very nature of God, who is not the God of confusion but of peace. Peace can only be the effect of union, and this is the reason why we find union so strongly inculcated throughout the whole of the Sacred Writings; but the very reverse of union is a leading feature of Dissent. "*Our Dissent*," says the Eclectic Reviewer, "*is itself fraught with Dissent, and breaks and breaks again* into distinct masses, as often as any excitement, local or general, puts the body in motion."* And this is perfectly consistent with the principles of Dissent; for, if it be right for every person to choose his own Teacher, it certainly must be right for every person to Dissent from a Teacher who does not meet his approbation, and choose one who does. And hence a Church consisting of thirty members, may divide and subdivide, and divide and subdivide again, until the thirty members shall have chosen thirty Teachers, and have formed themselves into thirty Churches distinct from each other. Or each member, should he not meet with a Teacher to suit him, may himself become a Church, and pray, and preach, and administer the Lord's Supper to himself; and should he become convinced of the truth of Adult Baptism by immersion, he may quite consistently, with the principles of Dissent, baptize himself in that way! Such are some of the results to which the silly and ridiculous principles of Dissent may consistently lead.

The following real instance tends to illustrate the remarks just made. A gentleman, a Dissenter, residing in a village where there is a Dissenting Meeting-house; on becoming dissatisfied with his Teacher, separated from him, leading with him his wife, two other ladies, and three men; making in all seven persons. These all met regularly three times every Sunday at the gentleman's house for worship, which was con-

* Eclectic Review, Sep. 1831, p. 192.

ducted by the four males, sometimes one taking a part in praying or preaching, and sometimes another. The ladies also were permitted at the conclusion of each preachment to make any remark they thought proper, either pro or con, in reference to what had been advanced by the preacher. The gentleman was himself a Sandemanian, and I believe his wife may be considered as holding the same faith, although there was some little difference between them; the two ladies were inclined to Arianism, and two of the three men were Calvinists; one of the two was a Baptist in sentiment, but had never been baptized by immersion; he did, however, repeatedly ask one of the two who assembled with him, to baptize him in that way, but to the present time he never has been so baptized. But although their sentiments were so various, and controversy would sometimes run very high, yet upon the whole they went on pretty agreeable for some time, at least as long as the novelty lasted. At length, however, one of the ladies married a gentleman at a distance, and consequently left the place, the other lady grew cool and seldom attended; sometimes she would steal to the Meeting-house, but she at last very rarely attended any place of worship at all. A short time after, one of the three men grew tired and left, and associated with Socinians, but is now, I fear, an Infidel, if not a professed Atheist. The *Church* was now consequently reduced to four, who still continued their meetings as usual for some months, when another of the men began to go now and then to Church; for this, he was of course, severely, though inconsistently, reprimanded by his two brethren and sister. At last he entirely left them, and succeeded, after a considerable time, in drawing the other man over to the Established Church with him, and both are now staunch and consistent Churchmen. The gentleman and his wife were then, of course, a *Church* of themselves, and strange as it may seem, they, to my certain knowledge, kept up the worship on the Sunday—the gentleman prayed with

his wife, and preached to her, and to himself; and as they could both sing, they sang together. The lady died a short time ago, the gentleman is, therefore, now left to himself; but how he goes on at present I know not, although from what I know of him, I believe he neither does, nor ever will, again enter any place of worship whatever on any account. It is very probable that he is a Congregational Independent *Church* of himself, and that he reads, and sings, and preaches, and prays with, and to himself—that he is in short both Minister and Congregation. And should such be the case, he acts quite consistently with the boasted principles of Dissent.

Such, indeed, Sir, are the abominable principles of Dissent, that *if they be true, there is no such a thing as heresy or schism in existence*. Whilst, therefore, those principles are inculcated, in vain will you attempt to stop the progress of what you inconsistently term heresy and schism, amongst you. Were it not known, indeed, that you feel the smart of the discord and divisions produced by your wicked principles, it might be very reasonably supposed that your preaching was to you a piece of mere fun and amusement; for at one time you preach up your principles with the greatest fervour and zeal, and at another you declaim most passionately against the effects produced by them. With great warmth you extol them, and exhort your people to put them into practice, but no sooner do they do so, than you blame them as warmly for it;—such is your ridiculous inconsistency. Some of you, however, do begin to find now it is too late, that your own anti-scriptural principles, if principles they are worth terming, are the cause of all the enormous and aggravating evils under which you are so justly labouring, and which you are so vainly endeavouring to remedy. You are in a dilemma; you have but two ways before you, and whichever you adopt, Dissent must inevitably fall;—you must either destroy the *causes* of the evils, the principles of Dissent, and then,

of course, Dissent is at an end, or you must continue to proceed as you are, and let those principles spend themselves in working out the destruction of your sect, —or more properly *sect of sects*. For you are without union, and therefore without strength; you are infinitely divided, and therefore miserably weak. You have been congratulating yourselves and your followers on the increase of the number of your Meeting-houses and Congregations; but this increase, instead of strengthening Dissent, has been a main cause of weakening it. “The multiplication of Societies by division, the propagation of Dissenterism by slips, the raising of Congregations by architectural forcing glasses, called chapels,” as the *Eclectic Review* remarks, are the very means by which the vitals of your sect are decaying.

As an instance of this, I may mention, that in a populous village in which a Church was built about three years ago, there was an Independent Meeting-house, with a numerous Congregation, including a large number of members, and having *under* it a talented but aged Minister. But, alas! for “the Cause,” the old Minister soon after died, and brought on the choice of a successor; “a crisis,” so graphically sketched by Mr. James, that I cannot forbear transcribing his words, although I have already quoted them. “No event that could happen,” says he, “can place the interests of the Society in greater peril. Distraction and division have so frequently resulted from this circumstance, so many Churches have been rent by it, that an argument has been founded upon it, if not against the right of popular election to the pastoral office, yet against the expediency of using it. It must be admitted, that on these occasions, our principles as Dissenters, and our practices as Christians, have not been unfrequently brought into disrepute. We have been accused of wrangling about a *Teacher* of religion, till we have lost our religion in the affray, and the state of many of our Congregations proves that the charge is not altogether

without foundation."* Nor would such a charge be without foundation in this case; for a Minister was solicited to preach on probation, and was at length elected by a slight majority, which he and his party endeavoured to strengthen by excommunicating fifteen of the minority at a stroke, and adding several to the majority who had been previously cut off for improper conduct. The minority, however, were not to be thus served; they, therefore, claimed the Meeting-house, referred the subject to the king, (who is, by the way, their head,) to be settled by him—and being strengthened by several who dissented from the majority, finally succeeded, after a great deal of shameful conduct on both sides, in ejecting their opponents out of the Meeting-house, and along with them the newly-elected Minister, notwithstanding his declaring that he was there "set for the defence of the Gospel." The Teacher, not relishing the treatment of these unbrotherly Saints, fired a paper bullet or two at them, and started off to look out for another situation, where he might be a little more firmly "set for the defence of the Gospel,"—that is; his own peculiar notions. The ejected, considering that the Meeting-house from which they had been driven, was now become an "Ichabod," immediately built another, which is now acting in full opposition to their more fortunate rivals; both parties still manifesting the most rancorous hatred to each other, and verifying the striking remarks of Mr. James: "I have known cases," he observes, "in which both the Minister and his flock have *refused even the civilities of ordinary intercourse* to those who have left *their Church* to associate with *another*."† "It does *not unfrequently* happen, that where two or more Churches of the *SAME* Denomination exist in a town, a *most unhappy, unscriptural, disgraceful temper is manifested towards each other*. *ALL the feelings of ENVY, JEALOUSY, AND*

* James, p. 223.

† James, p. 130.

ILL-WILL are cherished and displayed with as much, or more bitterness, than TWO RIVAL TRADESMEN WOULD EXHIBIT IN THE MOST DETERMINED OPPOSITION OF INTERESTS. This is peculiarly the case where two Churches have been formed by a SCHISM out of one. Oftentimes the FEUD has been perpetuated through one generation, and has been BEQUEATHED to the generation following." Mr. James then very justly exclaims: "Can it be, that these are Churches of SAINTS! Can it be, that these are ALL ONE in Christ! Can it be, that these are Societies whose rule is the Word of Christ—whose conduct is the image of Christ—whose end is the Glory of Christ!! SHAME, PUBLIC, DEEP, INDELIBLE SHAME ON SUCH SOCIETIES! IT IS THUS THAT CHURCHES QUARREL TO FIND SPORT FOR DEVILS, AND THEIR FOLLOWERS UPON EARTH."* I could not have given near so good a description of the quarrel and its effects, in the instance alluded to, as Mr. James has here given. But what has been the result? Why, just what might have been anticipated: The respectable, and the more sensible part of the people, disgusted at the "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness" of the "rival Saints," have entirely left them, and gone over to the Church, where they know they will ever enjoy peace and quietness, truth and concord. And, besides, "the Interest" which before supported one Minister comfortably, has now, in its much weaker and divided state, and with less means, to maintain two; and as the Meeting-houses are neither of them able to afford anything like decent salaries, they will never command Ministers of respectability or talent; and, therefore, Dissent in this village is never likely again to put on a respectable appearance, which is rendered far less probable from its having now to contend against the respectable and extending influence of the Church. The consequence is, that both the Ministers, with their respective interests, are in the right way of being fairly starved out.

* James, p. 126.

Thus, as in a multitude of instances besides, which might be adduced, the increase of Meeting-houses is so far from promoting the welfare of the Dissenting Interest, as many are ignorantly led to suppose, that it has an effect exactly to the contrary; and this the more enlightened of the Dissenters now begin to discover, and bitterly lament. They see the mischiefs, miseries, and desperate evils of their schism-producing principles. They see them prostrating their energies, and ruining the efficiency of "the Cause;" and they are forced to acknowledge, with despondent hearts, that "the principles of the Congregational system have not been productive of all the benefit which might have been expected from them."* And that, as another Dissenter remarks,—“The state of Dissenting Congregations *throughout* the country is *generally* such as to present a *discouraging aspect*.”† “To those who are really Dissenters, and as such, are concerned for the prosperity of their body, I wish I could hold out the prospect of a better state of things than they now witness.”‡ “The times *are critical*,” says the Eclectic, “it is *not to be concealed*, that the voluntary funds for supporting the Dissenting Ministry have been seriously diminished by the impoverishment of the people, and that *hundreds* of pious and deserving Ministers are struggling against the hardships of extreme poverty. The voluntary system is dependent for its working upon something else than its own inherent energy.”§ And yet it is this very “voluntary system” which Dissenters are continually praising and recommending to Churchmen as coming from God, and so much superior to every other in existence. Dissenters must really be either out of their senses themselves, or believe that Churchmen are so; or with what face can they so strongly recommend to others the adoption of a system which they openly declare “does not work well,” and has failed themselves? Let

* Eclectic Rev. 1832, p. 137. † Remarks, &c. p. 21. ‡ Remarks, &c. p. 67.
 § Eclectic Rev. Feb. 1832, p. 144.

Dissenters show us their system spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land, producing union, concord, peace, and harmony,—triumphing over the enemies of Christianity,—going on from strength to strength, and filling the whole country with its glory : and then, with conscience and confidence, they may recommend it, and we may safely adopt it. But when we see their system producing the greatest evils, and ruining them as a body, and calling forth from them the bitterest lamentations on account of the discord, quarrellings, bickerings, heresies, and schisms which that system is continually producing, should we not be really mad in even attempting to adopt it? Dissenters surely might give Churchmen credit for sense enough to wait till Dissent is in a far superior state to what it is, before they even think of making any approaches to it. Words in praise of a system contradicted by positive facts are mere wind, and will ever be considered such by persons who make a right use of their ears and eyes.

In speaking of Congregations once flourishing and prosperous, but now withered and decayed, the same Review says—"Certain it is that the name of a Church has not unfrequently been retained by the organic remains of a body Congregate, in which all social life had been long extinct—a mere fossil of society. We have Old Sarum and Gatton Churches among us."* After what we have heard about Old Sarum and Gatton Boroughs, surely no argument can be necessary to show that such "corrupt and rotten" Churches ought to be at once destroyed. The state of Dissent, from the dismal view given of it by Dissenters themselves, is indeed such that it appears past all possible remedy. Its numerous pernicious evils are inherent in the system, and can never be remedied but by the destruction of the system itself. They all result from the demoralising principles of Dissent, and can

* Eccl. Rev. 1831, p. 429.

never be redressed but by the renunciation of those principles.

It is, however, gratifying to every lover of true Christianity, that Dissent, which is a bad edition of it, with alterations and additions, is in such unfavourable circumstances, that it is indeed declining. The rich and respectable, who are, of course, its pillars, are fast deserting its ranks, and coming over to the Church;—and who can wonder at it? Men of sense and piety cannot but be disgusted at the numerous evils of what a Dissenter terms your “mob-government.”* Such persons wisely seek for peace and truth in the bosom of the Church, where they know they are to be found and enjoyed. The Dissenter just alluded to, observes, “If Dissenters would retrieve themselves from the *low estimation* into which they *have fallen*, they must remedy those defects which have driven men of influence from their Congregations.” For, “it is an often-repeated fact, that when men grow rich in the world, they desert the Dissenters, or at least, that this is the case with their children after them.”† The reason of this is very obvious; when men grow rich, if they do not obtain a good education for themselves, they do for their children, who by this means, become persons of enlightened and enlarged minds, incapable of being contracted within the narrow limits and selfish views of Dissenting bigotry. “It is a common feeling, I believe,” says the same writer, “amongst persons of education, that any Government is better than that of a *mob*.” It is so, and therefore it is not at all surprising, that “notwithstanding the faults that are discernible in the Church of England, the respectable part of the community will sooner submit to them than to MOB-GOVERNMENT.”‡ Were a Churchman to designate the Dissenting Form of Church-Government by the term “*mob-government*,” it would be considered offensive; such, however, this Dissenter

* Remarks, p. 9.

† Ibid, p. 24.

‡ Ibid, p. 9.

terms it. He again says, "it is a notorious fact, that our Congregations exhibit a dearth of society to well-educated persons, that has a strong tendency to drive them from their communion."* And the Eclectic laments thus: "No circumstance, perhaps, has had greater effect in alienating the most promising of our youth from the worship and institutions of their fathers, than the difficulty of finding intelligent and well-bred associates within the contracted circle. Not all the labours of the 'Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society'—not all the *refined taste*, and *powerful eloquence*, and *engaging modesty*, (engaging modesty too!!!) of the 'World' newspaper, (which, with all its *refined taste*, and *powerful eloquence*, and *engaging modesty*, is at an end,) will be able to counteract *this tendency to defection*, unless efficient exertions are made to gain the relative standing that *has been lost*. Any cause that does not succeed in attaching to it the majority of the pious and intelligent among the rising generation, must be in *imminent danger of rapid decline*."† Now as it is an acknowledged fact that there is in Dissent "*this tendency to defection*"—that "the rich and respectable" are fast deserting its ranks, and that it cannot attach to itself either the "pious" or the "intelligent among the rising generation," it "must be in imminent danger of *rapid decline*." And this is certainly sufficient to fill the minds of the most sanguine of the Dissenters with very gloomy forebodings for the future. "Indeed, no other state of things can be reasonably expected, when even the Minister himself is often a fit companion only for rustics. The people being in his own rank of life, receive their tone from their instructor, and, insensible to the distinctions of society, they value themselves upon their spiritual degree, which becomes a substitute for decency and good manners."‡ Of course, all such conduct is disgusting to all respectable and intelligent

* Remarks, p. 21. † Eclectic Rev. p. 492. ‡ Remarks, &c. p. 21.

persons, who very justly conceive that religion was never designed to destroy the different gradations in the scale of society, but to bind people to act properly in them. But it is an evident truth, that of all people Dissenters are the most disrespectful and uncourteous to their superiors. Mr. James remarks—"It is no uncommon thing for religious" (that is, Dissenting) "*servants to give themselves such airs, to manifest such a degree of consequence, and to expect so much deference,* as to lead some heads of families to say that they would rather have good merely moral servants than religious ones";* or, in other words, that they would rather have servants who are not Dissenters than those that are. Such behaviour is entirely owing to your democratical scheme of Dissent. The people so accustomed to the levelling notions of their religious system, apply them to all the common affairs of life: proudly thinking themselves equal to their superiors; they act towards them with that insolence and impertinence which persons of education and respectability will never endure. The consequence is, they leave the Dissenters, and go where they can receive that deference and respect which are due to their rank and station.

The deplorable state of your Ministry is another great cause, and very good evidence, of the declining state of Dissent, and is, therefore, the subject of much lamentation to Dissenters. "One of the great causes of that *disrepute* into which the Dissenters *have fallen*, has arisen from the insufficient character of their Ministry."† "The facility afforded to the propagation of Religion by the Act of Toleration has raised up shoals of adventurers, who have embarked in the spiritual warfare upon their own account, but often with carnal weapons, and LADEN WITH MISCHIEF IN EVERY SHAPE THAT HUMAN FOLLY CAN DEVISE. *Independent* of each other, and irresponsible to any tribunal but

* James, p. 163.

† Remarks, 13.

that of their *deluded followers, collected from the scum of society*, and easy dupes to whatever may alarm their fears or gratify their pride, they find refuge in the generic name of Dissenter."* And again, speaking of a great change which some time ago took place in the preaching of the propagators of Dissent, he says,— "From the frigid exemplification of moral virtues—the new Preachers gave into all the *excesses of a wild enthusiasm*, for which they had the applause of the vulgar. The chasms occasioned by the dissolution of old Churches"—(Dissenting Societies he means)— "were filled up by others *infected with this leaven*; which also insinuated itself into those that survived, until a *spurious piety overspread the whole mass, leaving THE NAME OF DISSENT A BY-WORD AND REPROACH TO RELIGION.*"† This, Sir, is really very strong language; but it is the language of a Dissenter; and, strong as it is, it is as true as it is strong, for Dissent will ever be esteemed by every true Christian and intelligent man, as a "*by-word and reproach to Religion.*" The puff and bluster—the self conceit and foppery of your "beardless boys," who come "piping hot" from your academies "laden with mischief in every shape that human folly can devise," may gull the ignorant and unwary, and gain the "applause of the vulgar," but will ever disgust every sensible and sober-minded Christian. The same Dissenter, alluding to these spiritual fungusses, very justly exclaims, "who can endure the frothy declamation of a *pulpit fop*, a young *sciologist*, who may have learnt—(it is rather doubtful)—to construe an ode in Horace, and to demonstrate a problem in Euclid, *but has never taken the dimensions of himself!! It is really quite sickening to hear a beardless youth* dealing forth his amorous effusions from Solomon's Song, under the mystical representation of the loves between Christ and his Church, and diving at another time into all the depths of Christian

* Remarks, p. 7.

† Remarks, p. 6.

experience." "There is hardly any thing more revolting to a serious mind, than to see the pulpit profaned by affectation and pedantry. When the young Preacher appears anxious for display, and exhibits his rhetorical rhapsodies in a succession of metaphors that sets all good taste at defiance—when he tortures his voice and features with the convolutions that may be expected in a stage player, and when he pronounces his decisions with an air of authority that belongs only to age and experience, we may be sure that his mind is taken up more with the thoughts of self than of the solemn truths that he should deliver." "It is one of the properties of ignorance," this Dissenting writer continues, "to pronounce with confidence, and hence it is that difficulties vanish so fast before many persons, who can solve mysteries and disentangle knots, that for many a long and weary hour have exercised the faculties of the wise and prudent; yet all is smooth and clear to these shallow pretenders, who, mounting upon the wings of their own fancy, make good the fable of Icarus, and lose themselves in the abyss of their own presumption. I would here ask, is it nothing to Dissenters that *they should cause* their way to be evil spoken of—that *they should furnish* hostile weapons to their adversaries—and above all, that *they should expose Religion itself to the mockery of the profane?* If these should be thought hard sayings, let any candid and judicious man look around him, and *survey, IN SILENCE, the state of their Churches and the qualifications of their Pastors.*"* And he will assuredly discover them, (I will add) both Ministers and Congregations, to be "in a position the *most undesirable* to a well-ordered mind," and affording demonstrative proof that their whole system is independent of Scriptural foundation, and utterly unworthy of God as its author—in short, "a by-word and reproach to religion."

I conceive the quotations already cited, which, how-

* Remarks, &c. pp. 15, 16, 17,

ever, might be very considerably augmented, amply sufficient to show that "the Dissenting Interest" is by no means in that prosperous condition in which many people suppose it, and in which you are interestedly anxious that they should believe it. Had the citations produced been taken from the opponents of Dissent, they might have been suspected of partiality and exaggeration; but coming, as they do, from Dissenters themselves, their correctness and truth cannot be suspected, and they must, therefore, tell with tenfold emphasis against Dissent. They clearly show that Congregational Independency is in a most deplorable state, sinking under the intolerable weight of its enormous and increasing evils—evils the more grievous and aggravating to Dissenters, because, being inherent in the system, they will admit of no remedy. They are, indeed, becoming so public and palpable, that they will not only be felt and lamented by Dissenters themselves, but "seen and read of all men;" and, with the system which produces them, repudiated by all the pious and intelligent of mankind.

I will now briefly notice a few of those things in which Dissenters condemn their own boasted principles, by acting at palpable variance with them; and as the writings of Dissenters afford sufficient materials for the purpose, I shall avail myself of them, knowing that you cannot but consider such authority unexceptionable. The Dissenting author of a letter inserted in a pamphlet by "Fiat Justitia," speaking of the inconsistencies of Dissenters with their own principles, observes, that Congregational Independency, or the voluntary system, "recognizes no authority that should send forth Missionaries. It *pre-supposes* a Congregation calling forth and choosing a Minister, before any Minister can be appointed to a local charge. It makes no provision for the support of the Missionary or Itinerant. All that has been done, therefore, by Congregationalists, has been done by means of specific Societies or Associations, having *no connexion with*

their system of Church polity, and acting in many respects AT PALPABLE VARIANCE WITH IT. For the Missionary is not elected by either the people to whom he is sent, or by any other Church, but is appointed by a Council Board or Committee." HE IS NOT INDEPENDENT and irresponsible, but "accountable to a Board of Directors, and subject to" (their) "oversight. A Missionary Society is an institution of Christ, or it is not. If not—if it rests only on expediency, how can it be pretended that we are adhering to a perfect model? If it may be reconciled with the Scripture model, then Congregationalism, from which this Institution is foreign, cannot be identified with the primitive model."* The reasoning of this candid Dissenter simply amounts to this—that if the principle of Missionary proceedings can "be reconciled with the Scripture," Congregational Dissent cannot.—Now, that Missionary proceedings, or the propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen, is an undeniable Scriptural duty, and in perfect accordance with the proceedings of the blessed Apostles, no Christian on earth—not even a Dissenter, will for a single moment call in question. If, therefore, there be any such thing as reason or common sense in the world, the fair and legitimate consequence must, according to this Dissenter's own showing, inevitably be, that Congregational Independency is entirely foreign to the Scriptures. This is an *argumentum ad hominem*, and is really most conclusive and decisive; and I know, Sir, that you cannot but feel it to be so. Had the Apostles and first Christians acted from principles such as your's,—had they proceeded according to the voluntary system, and waited till they were sent for, tried, and elected by the people, before they became their spiritual Teachers and Guides, the blessed Gospel never would—it never could—have extended beyond the limits of Judea; in fact, it never would—it never could—have

* Two Letters, &c. by Fiat Justitia, p. 112.

been established in the world at all. Had the voluntary system always been acted upon, we here in Britain should have been at this moment enveloped in all the gross darkness and horrible superstitions of Druidism, offering human sacrifices to idols. Idolatry was, and would ever have been, our voluntary choice, as it now is that of millions of benighted Heathens. And were the Christians of our times actuated by no better principles than yours, not a single Missionary would ever leave our shores to proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel to the perishing nations of the earth. Missionaries would have to wait till an individual, or a set of individuals would give them "a Call," and choose them to be their Teachers; which would never be done. For it is a well-known and sorrowful fact, that the Heathen are just as well satisfied with their idolatry as we are with our Christianity; and are so far from desiring to be instructed in the principles of Christianity, that it is a most difficult thing to induce them to pay any attention to them. Besides, the very idea of persons voluntarily choosing a Teacher, pre-supposes that they understand the religion of the Teacher, which is sufficiently absurd as it regards professing Christians, but most ridiculously so, as it regards the Heathen, who are ignorant of even the name of Christ, and would, consequently, just as soon voluntarily choose a Christian Teacher, as professing Christians would voluntarily choose a Heathen Priest. And ignorant of Christianity and its precious blessings, the poor benighted and perishing Heathen would ever remain, if Christians were influenced by no better principles than those of Dissent. You will, of course, argue that the Independents do support a Missionary Society. Yes; but allow me to say, in the words of the last-mentioned Dissenter, that it "is notorious that the Missionary Society did not originate with the Independents, although now chiefly supported by them; but ITS VERY CONSTITUTION WAS AT VARIANCE

WITH STRICT INDEPENDENCY."* Nor can Independents support that Society, or any Missionary exertions whatever, without directly violating their own principles: for the principles of Dissent are diametrically opposed to the very idea of publishing the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it. Christ commanded his Disciples, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." But had the Disciples of Christ acted upon the wicked principles of Congregational Independents, this command would never have been obeyed. And this alone, were there no other proof in existence, is quite sufficient to show that your system is directly contrary to the Word of God; except we can impiously imagine that the Blessed Redeemer is the author of a system which operates in the direct violation of his own commands.

It is truth, that in whatever light your principles, or what you call the voluntary system, is viewed in connexion with the Word of God, its anti-scriptural and iniquitous character evidently appears. "Fiat Justitia," himself also a Dissenting Minister of some eminence, in pointing out to a brother Dissenter some of the inconsistencies of Dissent, says, "We are always directed, you know, in introductory discourses, to the model—the New Testament model." "Now as to every thing being inadmissible but what is prescribed by the model, and every thing binding that it includes: is a College in the model? Are Highbury and Homerton provided for by primitive precedent? The first Churches had a plurality of Bishops—have yours? The Lord's Supper every Lord's-day, and mutual exhortation by the brethren if able or disposed, are customs generally admitted to be primitive—where are they now? Ministers are represented by the (Dissenting) *theory*, agreeably to original custom, as called to the office *out* of the Church which they are chosen

* Two Letters, &c. by Fiat Justitia, 112, Note.

to serve—are your's so called? I have known indeed a young man go from a College, preach on probation, and be approved; then be dismissed from his original Church, and become a member of that to which he had preached; and *then* be called or chosen as a member of it to the pastoral office over the rest of his brethren; *all this I have known done, TO GET FACT AND THEORY TO COINCIDE, that that might be attended to which was supposed to be the original custom, and which as such was further supposed to have the character of law.* I admire the motive in the conduct described; but, is it possible that the parties *could impose upon themselves the belief that they attained their object, or that there was the least similarity between their cumbrous contrivances and the primitive proceeding which they attempted to imitate?* ALL THESE AND SIMILAR DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN US AND WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIBES—our doing, in some cases too little, and in others too much;—these I know are completely defensible on the ground of general principles and allowable expediency; they are defensible *only* upon this ground, and, *therefore, it really does not become us to talk so much about the beauty of the model, and the sin of expediency, when in practice we depart from the one and act upon the other.* “As to some other matters that strike me,” this Dissenting Minister observes, “the shortest way to describe them will be, to quote a case in which most of them meet. I take that of a Minister (whom I have in my mind at the moment) supported by a county mission; he is appointed by that body; he serves three Churches,—that is, in three distinct villages he has a small number of communicants who form in each place a separate Church; he is pastor of all, he acts as such in the government of each Society, and he preaches at each place once every Sabbath. Now let us see what we have here. Here is patronage, or foreign appointment—perhaps lay appointment—as the committee of the mission might consist at the time more

of Laymen than of Ministers; here is Episcopal superintendence and control; for to the Minister, the Members of the said Committee are in the place of an ecclesiastical superior; to them he is accountable, and by them he can be removed; here is plurality, three Churches under one Bishop, or, if they are considered as one Church (which in the case I am contemplating they are not), then we have a Church consisting of persons who do *not* meet together in one place. Here is single duty; here is 'endowment' in the form of an annual grant from a fund not raised by the people who are instructed, that is, there is such extra assistance afforded the Minister, in addition to what is raised by the voluntary principle—assistance so important, that if it were withdrawn the man must remove, and the people perish. This instance shews, that however the *theory* may demand popular election to the pastoral office—support exclusively by voluntary offerings, the freedom of Churches and Ministers from foreign control—yet there are cases in which the advocates of these principles depart from them all. Yes, and their departure is *sanctified* by the circumstance, that a benevolent and holy *expediency* demands it, that thus they can secure a sum of good which an adherence to system would sacrifice or prevent.*

These are the honest declarations of a Dissenting Minister, and from them we at once discover that Dissenters cannot fulfil that command of Christ, to "preach the Gospel to every creature,"—they cannot announce the joyful news of salvation to ignorant and perishing souls, without departing from all their own principles. Is there a Christian in existence, I ask, who can conscientiously believe those principles to be of God which will not allow of obedience to his own commands? Is there a Christian in existence who will not spurn from him with feelings of "benevolent and holy" indignation, the selfish and inhuman

* Two Letters, &c. by Fiat Justitia, p. 101, 102, 103.

principles of Dissent, which will not permit those who hold them to preach, or assist in sending others to preach the Gospel to guilty and lost souls? Is there a Christian on the face of the earth who can imagine that the principles of Dissent, which go to the overthrow of the glorious scheme of man's redemption, are to be found in the Bible? Yes, if the principles of Dissent were always consistently acted upon, and never departed from, the souls redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb would never be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and would never be prepared for the enjoyment of the happiness above; so far as human exertions are concerned. In short, the humiliation, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, might have been, and would have been entirely in vain, and the prophecy that "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied,"* would never have been fulfilled, if the principles of Dissent, or the voluntary system, had ever been acted upon, and never departed from. No man can be saved without faith in Christ. But "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"† and how shall they be sent on the voluntary system or the principles of Dissent? For according to that system, or those principles, no person has any right whatever to go amongst those who are ignorant of Christianity, to teach them the glorious truths of the everlasting Gospel, till they have chosen him to do so, or till they have given him what in the *cant* of Dissent is termed "a Call," which would never be. And consequently the whole world might perish without any of the benefit or blessings of redemption, in spite of the principles of Dissent. But the Church of England

* Isaiah, liii. 11.

† Romans x. 13, 1, 15.

can accomplish every command of Christ, and say to her sons in virtue of the commission and authority she has received from her Divine Lord and Master, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," without violating or departing from one of her principles. She does not say, you must wait, and not stir a step to preach the Gospel to any creature, nor say a word about it, until some person or persons shall have chosen you to be their Spiritual Teacher, should that be even till every soul shall have passed into eternity. No, actuated by nobler,—by heavenly principles, she says wait *not* till you are called and chosen by men, and have received authority from them to teach them the doctrines of the cross, for that might be to eternity; but go forth in virtue of the commission, and armed with the authority which you have received from the great Head of the Church, and preach the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God to every creature, and shun not to declare the whole counsel of God to them "WHETHER THEY WILL HEAR, OR WHETHER THEY WILL FORBEAR."* You are not "to seek to please men," for if you "seek to please men," you are not the servants of Christ. You are not dependent upon men; you are not their "*hirelings*," hired and paid by them to preach what they may please, and to gratify their "itching ears," ye are the servants of the Most High God, and should ever remember the words of your Blessed Lord, "He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me," and "Woe unto you when *all* men shall speak well of you."

Of course you will urge, "but we abandon all our principles, and send the Gospel to those ignorant of it. We do *not* allow every man to choose his own Spiritual Teacher. We choose and send Spiritual Teachers to those whom we may think in need of them, whether they approve of them or not. We do not even ask them

whether they will receive them or not. We heed *not* our principles; to send the Gospel to the Heathen, and to some in our own country we hesitate not ‘*to depart from them all.*’” Yes, Sir, but stop, if your principles be of God—if they be principles of the New Testament, what right have you “to depart from them all?” If they be of God, what right has presumptuous man to reject them? It must be a great sin to do so. O, but you have an answer ready, our “departure is *sanctified* by the circumstance, that a benevolent and a holy *expediency* demands it,” and we can thus “secure a sum of good, which an adherence to system would sacrifice or prevent.” That is, although your principles are the principles of the New Testament, and it is consequently a sin “*to depart from them,*” yet you hesitate not to do so, because as you conceive it may be productive of good; in other words, you presumptuously resolve “to do *evil* that good may come.”* And as to your saying that your “departure is *sanctified,*” it sounds very much like “*sanctified wickedness.*”

But after all, who would have imagined that Dissenters do positively depart from all their own principles—from all those very principles which they are perpetually telling us are founded upon the Word of God? Why really with what consciences can Dissenters recommend their principles to Churchmen, and find fault with them for not adopting them, when they themselves do not adhere to them, but “depart from them all?” Yes, depart from all those very principles which they tell us they have adopted from *tenderness of conscience*. And I presume that these self-same persons *depart* from the self-same principles from the self-same *tenderness of conscience*. You tell us, however, that you depart from them because *expediency* demands it, but if *expediency* be the rule of your conduct, where is your consistency or honesty in vauntingly reiterating that the Word of God is your *only* rule of

faith and practice? Let me tell you in the humiliating language of the Dissenting Minister last quoted, "it really does not become you to talk so much about the beauty of the" (New Testament) "model, and the sin of expediency, when in practice you depart from the one," (that is from the New Testament) "and act upon the other," that is upon expediency. When Churchmen, without any departure at all from any one of their principles, plead expediency, or rather decency, for the adoption of some few *non-essential*, and therefore trivial things, you magnify it, and condemn it as a sin of the most heinous and unpardonable nature. And yet you plead the same expediency in justification of your own practices, even though these practices cause you to depart from every one of your *fundamental principles*. Is it really possible for guile and hypocrisy to be more glaringly manifest than they are in those, who, when expediency is pleaded by Churchmen, stigmatize it as sinful and wicked, but when pleaded by themselves, cantingly term it "a benevolent and holy expediency." Such conduct is despicable in the eyes of every honest and true Christian, and richly deserves the reprobation of every candid and intelligent man.

In bringing this letter to a conclusion, I conceive that I am fully justified in remarking, that I have now shewn clearly enough, except for those who are determined that "they will not see," that the system of Congregational Independency is entirely destitute of foundation in the Sacred Scriptures, for no Church mentioned in the Word of God can possibly be proved to have been both Congregational *and* Independent. I have shown that the election of Ministers by the people is not only contrary to the Word of God, but also absurd. I have also shown from the most explicit and clear testimonies of Dissenters themselves, that their whole system is fundamentally and entirely erroneous. And I have also shown that Dissenters finding their principles not at all adapted to their purposes, and the operation of them at variance with some of the plain

commands of God, act inconsistently with those principles and abandon them altogether. And seeing, therefore, that such is the case—seeing that Dissenters do really “depart from all their own principles,” they cannot surely blame me for departing from those principles too, and conforming to the Church, where I can be at least a *consistent* Christian. Dissenters are not, and cannot be consistent, their system, as has been fully shown, will not allow them to be so. They honestly confess that its inherent evils are so great and manifold, that nothing can be done in a way of remedying them, without abandoning the whole system, and adopting one, more resembling Episcopacy. They find after “the experience of two centuries,” the period since Congregational Independency was first invented, that “*the system does not work well*,” and that the very “*genius of Independency is hostile to the preservation of order and good government* ;” and that, therefore, an alteration must take place. And the very circumstance of their desiring to abandon or alter the system, is a sufficient condemnation of it. For if your system be *now* a pure, Scriptural system, as you affirm, it must be wickedness to attempt to alter it ; because if it be Scriptural *now*, it certainly cannot be so if it be altered. And if it be as unscriptural and false as Dissenters themselves represent it, of which there is no doubt, where is your consistency ? Where is your honesty ? Where are your “tender consciences ?” Nay, where is your Christianity in so constantly declaring as you do, that it is Scriptural, and that the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice, thus “deceiving the souls of the simple ?” But there is no doubt, that should your system be altered ever so much, or should it be entirely abandoned and another adopted, we shall still be told that the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice ; and that your new system, or the old one new modelled, is quite Scriptural and perfect, and the very essence of every excellency. Nevertheless, it is gratifying to know from

the admissions and lamentations of Dissenters, that the "Dissenting Interest" as it at present exists, is so far from prospering under the favour of Heaven, as Dissenters artfully represent it, to "minds of a certain class," that it is actually withering under the curse of the Almighty. The more respectable and sensible of the Dissenters, disgusted at the discord, confusion, and endless schisms resulting from their system of "mob-government" and anarchy, are wisely leaving it and conforming to the Church, where they can enjoy true religion, with its blessed and invariable effects—peace and quietness. The Interest in short, as Dissenters both see and lament, is so torn by internal strife and discord, and almost infinite divisions, that it is in a most deplorable state, and considering its numerous defections, by which it is daily growing weaker and gradually declining, it bids fair for dying in the course of time, like the numerous false systems of other days—a natural death.

To the arguments already advanced, I may add that of novelty, for in spite of all your assertions to the contrary, I challenge you to prove that such a system existed any where in the world during the first fifteen hundred years of the Christian era. A Dissenter honestly confesses as has been already seen, that Congregational Independency has had only "the experience of *two centuries*," which is of course decisive. Indeed, of all the manifold heresies and schisms that have in different ages opposed and disturbed the Church of Christ, that of Congregational Independency was neither known or heard of in all Christendom, till it was invented by the "infamous and immoral Robert Brown,"* a little more than "two centuries" ago. The same Robert Brown, after setting his own unhallowed notions afloat, and making a Church or two, which like those that have succeeded them, quarrelled amongst themselves, repented of all his wicked errors, renounced

* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. 1. p.375.

his Dissenting principles as false and heretical to Dr. Lindsall, then Bishop of Peterborough, and humbly desired the Bishop to forgive and absolve him, which was accordingly done, and the Dissenting Mr. Brown being thus re-admitted into the Church, much to his credit never afterwards left it. Let me, therefore, entreat you, and all those who have followed him in his pernicious and wicked ways of separating from the Church, to follow him also in his excellent deed of conforming to her.

That it may please the Lord of his great goodness and mercy, to turn you all from the error of your ways, and bring you to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus, and enable you to live godly, quiet, and peaceable lives in union and communion with his holy Church, against which you are now so bitterly opposed, is the sincere prayer of,

Sir,

Your's very faithfully,

L. S. E.

LETTER V.

ON THE THREE ORDERS IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH—BISHOPS, PRIESTS, AND DEACONS.

SIR,

Although what has been already advanced is amply sufficient to justify my conduct in leaving your sect and uniting to the Church, and far more than you can possibly invalidate by legitimate argument, and enough I imagine to shake your Dissenting principles ; yet if you will be bold enough to proceed with me to the careful consideration of what I shall further lay before you, you will be ready, I doubt not, to justify any one who shall take the step which I have taken. I proceed, then, to show that the Government of your Societies is contrary to the Word of God, and subversive of that order, authority, and obedience which the Scriptures so clearly define, and so frequently force upon our attention. You exactly reverse the Scriptural order : for that authority and power with which God has invested his Ministers, you say belong to the people : and that obedience which God demands from the people to his Ministers, your people demand from their Teachers : so that with you, Teachers and people have exactly changed places. Your Societies are entirely destitute of offices of Ecclesiastical Government,

and consequently of all those Ecclesiastical Officers which the Holy Scriptures distinctly describe. This, (as one error leads to another,) is a natural consequence;—consistency requires it. For, as you give to the people that authority and power which belong to the Bishop, or chief Pastor of the Christian Church, you have no need of the Episcopal Office, and therefore reject it altogether;—not, particularly, because you fancy it unscriptural, but because the admission of it would overthrow the whole of your Dissenting system. Instead of bending your opinions to the Word of Truth, or rather drawing them from it, you make the Word of God bend to your pre-conceived notions.

You have but one order of what you term Spiritual Officers in your Societies; but from the Scriptures I find, that in the early Christian Church, there were three distinct orders of Spiritual Officers—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; or, in other words, the office which Timothy and Titus held, and the two offices under them.* I use the word *Priest* for Elder or Presbyter, of which it is a contraction. You contend, I am aware, that the office of Bishop or Elder is one and the same, because in the New Testament, you say, Bishops are called Elders, and Elders Bishops, synonymously. That all Bishops were Elders is quite certain; but that all Presbyters were Bishops in the full sense of the word, or in the same sense in which Timothy and Titus were, is just as false. The connexion in which the word Bishop stands, will always determine its meaning. St. Paul “sent to Ephesus, and called the *Elders* of the Church,” and said unto them, “take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers.”† As the word “Overseers” is the same as Bishops, we here find that the very same persons that are called Elders are also called Bishops, and with the greatest accuracy; for in relation to their

* 1 Tim. iii. 10.

† Acts, xx. 17, 28.

people or flock, they were Overseers or Bishops; but in relation to the Apostle, who was then exercising the office of Bishop in the sense in which we *now* understand the word, they were but Elders only. That they were not Bishops in the highest sense of the term is very evident, from the circumstance of the Apostle's sending Timothy to exercise the office of a Bishop over both them and their Church, which he would certainly not have done had they held the same office which Timothy held. For if their office had been equal to his, they might have ordained Elders—charged them what doctrine to preach—received accusations against them, and have judged them, just as well as he.

“The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder—feed the flock of God which is among you (ἐπισκοποῦντες) taking the oversight thereof,”* or Bishopping over them. Elders are termed Bishops here exactly as they are in the passage before quoted; they were not Bishops over other Ministers, as Timothy and Titus were, but simply over their people. To argue that they were all Bishops, in the highest sense of the term, would be just as absurd as to argue that they were all Apostles, because the Apostle Peter was an Elder, as he here styles himself. He was an Elder and an Apostle too; they were simply Elders in reference to other Ministers, but in reference to their people they were Bishops, acting over them as such. And in the very same sense, the Priests or Elders of the Church of England are Bishops; and their Bishops, or those who are Overseers over them, as well as their people, may with strict propriety of speech, charge them to “take heed to themselves, and all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them Overseers;” or, if you please, Bishops; for in that relation they stand to their people. With respect to their people, they are Bishops or Over-

* 1 Peter, v. 1, 2.

seers; but with respect to other Elders, and to their Bishops, they are simply Elders and no more. They are Bishops in relation to their people only; but the Bishops, or highest order of the Clergy, are Bishops or Overseers in relation to the Clergy under them, as well as to the people. But to argue that because Elders are sometimes called Bishops in one sense they are so in every sense, is absurd. The word Bishop is evidently used in the New Testament in different senses, but then no difficulty can ever arise as to its meaning, because as before observed, the context always clearly determines it. The word literally means Overseer; any one who is placed in any kind of authority over any other persons or things—the shepherd of a flock of sheep, and such like, may be called a Bishop with propriety; but as the indiscriminate use of the word would create almost endless confusion, the meaning of it is now limited to signify the chief Pastor of the Christian Church. In the Apostolic age, those to whom we now confine the term Bishop were generally called Apostles or Angels; but for the sake of distinction, and out of reverence to the *inspired* Apostles, the term Apostle was dropped by their uninspired successors, and applied to the inspired Twelve alone, and that of Bishop substituted in its place, and exclusively used to describe those who continued to hold the highest dignity in the Church, such as Timothy, Titus, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, and others. But, provided we understand what is meant, I attach no importance whatever to the names; for whether those who hold the highest dignity in the Ministry of the Church be called Bishops, or superior Presbyters, is a matter of little or no consequence—it makes nothing either for or against, in the controversy. All I contend for is this—that there are three distinct orders in the Christian Ministry clearly revealed in the Scriptures of truth, and that the highest exercised authority over the other two. There is what St. Paul terms “the office of a Deacon,” and what he terms “the office of

a Bishop," and then there is the office which Timothy held above them both, which clearly shews three distinct offices or orders in the Ministry of the Church. In speaking of these three offices or orders, I may remark, that, in order to prevent misunderstanding, whether wilful or otherwise, I shall use the terms *now* employed to describe them—Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. By the word "*Deacon*," I mean him who holds that which St. Paul terms "the office of a Deacon;" by the word "*Priest*," I mean him who holds that which St. Paul terms "the office of a Bishop;" and by the word "*Bishop*," I mean him who holds that office which Timothy held.

That which we understand by Episcopacy, appears to me to be so clearly revealed in the Scriptures, but particularly in the Epistles of the Apostles, and so firmly supported by the writings of their immediate successors, that it really seems surprising that any man, or any set of men, pretending to Christianity, should so determinately shut their eyes to such decisive testimony—such plain and naked truth. If we turn to the Church of Christ, as it existed under the Old Testament economy, before his incarnation, we there find that Christ did himself appoint three ranks of those who ministered in his holy temple, the High Priests, the Priests of the second order, and the Levites. And, as he is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, what was right in the Christian Church *then*, cannot be wrong in the same Church *now*. But I am well aware that Dissenters generally look upon the Old Testament as something widely different from the New. When speaking of the Old Testament to Dissenters, when I was a Dissenter, or producing any passage therefrom to establish any point of doctrine, I have repeatedly heard them say, "Yes; but come to the New Testament, *that* is the law for Christians—we live in different times altogether—you know we have the Gospel—the Old Testament is all done away with now—we live in times of far greater light and knowledge," and

so on in a similar strain. There are, indeed, a great many Dissenters who scarcely ever look into the Old Testament at all. The better sort of Dissenters are aware that the *whole spirit* of it, is directly against them, as well as the letter. They, therefore, with the generality of the Dissenters, turn their backs upon it, and carefully confine their arguments to the *New Testament* only, as if the Old and New Testament contradicted and were opposed to each other—as if the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of all the Old Patriarchs, Prophets, and other faithful Christians* of the Jewish Dispensation, were *not the God of the Christians* of the Gospel Dispensation—as if the sun which shines *now*, were *not* the same luminary that stood still at Joshua's bidding, to give him light to pursue the enemies of Israel—as if the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the believing Gentiles, were not also the Saviour of the believing Jews—as if, in short, the glorious scheme of man's redemption were not *one* united, consistent whole, revealed and carried on in one *connected* train of events, all bearing one upon another, and explanatory one of another, of which the *Bible*, the Old and New Testament together, is the Sacred Record and Interpreter. And it is very lamentable to see, that Dissenting Teachers and Writers seem very careful to inculcate and keep afloat this semi-infidel notion. Mr. Scales says, that “Graham says very truly, that they who ascend so high as the age of Moses, or indeed as any period of the Jewish economy, to find the model of the Christian Church, are antiquarians to a dangerous excess; for they endeavour to demonstrate the *existence* and character of a thing prior to its own beginning, and, of course, make Moses the founder of their constitution rather than Christ, who is the only law-giver to Christians.”* One cannot read a passage like this without shuddering at the wretched state of its author and approvers; for this very passage goes to

the full length of entirely rejecting the whole of the Old Testament, and a greater part, if not all, the New. It seems that if we go to "the age of Moses," or "*any* period of the Jewish economy to find the model of the Christian Church," we "endeavour to demonstrate the *existence of a thing prior to its own beginning*, and of course make Moses the founder of our constitution rather than Christ, who is the *only* law-giver to Christians." Moses is here set in opposition to Christ, as though the revelation of the only wise and merciful God to his fallen creature man by Moses, in old time, concerning Christ, and by the Prophets, were of a kind to be now injurious, as tending to mislead those who "search" them for religious instruction. And if Moses is to be thus dealt with, what is to become of all the Old Testament Writers? Why, they are all to be rejected; for we are not to go to "ANY PERIOD OF THE JEWISH ECONOMY." And if Moses and all the Old Testament Writers, and their Writings, are to be thus dealt with, what is to save St. Paul and his writings? As I shall quote pretty freely from the writings of St. Paul, I shall not be at all surprised to hear Messrs. Scales, Graham, and Co. accusing me of making St. Paul "*the founder of my constitution RATHER THAN Christ, who is the only law-giver to Christians.*" The writings of Moses and those of St. Paul stand upon the very same foundation, and they both stand or fall together. If Christ is to be believed "RATHER THAN" Moses, why is he not to be believed "RATHER THAN" St. Paul? And upon what better foundation do the writings of the Evangelists stand than those of St. Paul or those of Moses? If we "endeavour to demonstrate" any thing by quotations from *their* writings, we shall be in danger of subjecting ourselves to the accusation of "making *them* the founders of our Constitution *rather than* Christ, who is the *only* law-giver to Christians." Christ is here called "the *ONLY* lawgiver to Christians," evidently to the exclusion of Moses; and if he is the *ONLY* law-giver to the exclusion of Moses,

why not to the exclusion of St. Paul and the Evangelists? They each stand upon the same foundation; invalidate or set aside one and the others share exactly the same fate. Hence as Christ, who is "the ONLY law-giver to Christians," has not written any thing at all himself, nor *given a single law that stands upon a different foundation to the writings of Moses*, Christians, or those whom Mr. Scales considers as such, namely, Dissenters, *are entirely without a single law*. Thus do we arrive at the "Principles of Dissent," and may easily account for Dissenters adhering to practices no where sanctioned or to be found in the Word of God.

At the risk, however, of being accused of making St. Peter "the founder" of my arguments "*rather than* Christ, who is the *only* lawgiver to Christians," I will venture to quote him. He says, "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* St. Peter, in these words, had especial reference to Moses and those of "old time;" whatever, therefore, Moses and the old Prophets have written, or in other words, the whole of the Old Testament, is of equal authority with the New, each being written by men "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and it is at our peril that we reject either the Old Testament or the New, or any part whatever of either of them. We cannot reject Moses without rejecting Christ, for Christ was present with him, and is in fact the author of what Moses has written. Every thing of a *typical* and ceremonial nature was of course abolished by the sacrifice of the great Antitype, but nothing else, and, therefore, whatever is not of a ceremonial or typical nature must still be considered and attended to, as far as circumstances will at all permit; or the Man of God will not be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

But it is also said "that they who ascend so high as the age of Moses, or indeed as any period of the Jewish

* 1 Peter, i. 21.

economy, to find the model of the Christian Church, endeavour to demonstrate the existence of a thing prior to its own beginning." The meaning of this is, that the Christian Church had no existence in the "age of Moses" or in "any period of the Jewish economy," for this was "prior to its beginning." Dissenters very probably wish this to be believed, that they may get rid of the arguments drawn from the *Christian Church* as it *existed* under the Jewish economy, against their Dissenting and Schismatical notions. But I would hope that every Christian knows and believes that the Christian Church has existed in every age of the world; from the days of Adam to the present moment, and that it will exist to the very end of the world, in spite of all the efforts of Schismatics to destroy it. The gates of Hell, that is, the ways of error—the different paths of Heresy and Schism which the Devil has opened up to lead people to Hell, shall never prevail against the Church. Adam and Eve, with Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, Moses, Samuel, and all the Holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and Holy Men, of whom we read in the Old Testament, and thousands of others during "the period of the Jewish economy," belonged to the Christian Church—they "all died in faith,"—in the faith of Christ, and were, therefore, *Christians* in the true sense of the word. Abraham believed in Christ: he rejoiced to see his day, "and he saw it and was glad." How, then, can it be said, that the Christian Church had no existence in "any period of the Jewish economy?" If Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, were not a Christian, where are we to find one? If faith in Christ constitutes a Christian, then he was one in sincerity and in truth. It matters not whether that faith be prospective or retrospective, if it be but fixed on Christ, the glorious Lord and Saviour of all, as well of those that believed under the Old Testament dispensation, as of those who believe under the New. The Church of Christ has, therefore, existed in every age of the

world, and whatever was excellent in its form of government, whatever is found therein is to be studied as God's word, and whatever is not expressly abrogated, must be lawful for us to adopt as circumstances may admit.

Returning from this short digression, I repeat, that if we turn to the Church of Christ as it existed throughout every period of the Jewish economy before his incarnation, we there find that Christ did himself appoint three ranks or orders of those who ministered in his holy temple—the High Priests—the Priests of the second order, and the Levites. And when he entered upon his personal Ministry upon earth, he appears to have *continued* its government in a similar form. Nor, perhaps, is it absurd to notice that he himself exercised the office of a Bishop, having under him his Twelve Apostles, as his Presbyters or Elders, and the seventy Disciples as his Deacons. And, as He is “the Head of his body, the Church” he is the source of all authority to the Church, and from him it descends. Just before his Ascension, therefore, he gave authority to his Apostles. “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Thus, Christ handed down to his Apostles the authority which he declared was given to him. And the Apostles, we know, continued to exercise the authority which they had received, and to be in every sense the chief Rulers of the Church while they lived. They ordained Elders and Deacons under them in the different Churches—commanded them what to preach and how to act—directed the Christians to perform their various important duties—rebuked and punished the delinquents, and sometimes with severity—and, in short, they had the entire “care of all the Churches.” And before they died, they committed the same authority which they had received, to others, commanding them virtually to keep up the three orders of Ministers in the Church,

by ordaining Elders and Deacons under them, as St. Paul commanded Timothy and Titus, in his Epistles to them. From these Epistles, the existence of the three degrees of rank in the spiritual officers of the Church, is quite as evident as at all necessary for those who believe God rather than men. But when it is considered that Dissenters avow that it is right for people to elect their own Ministers, in direct opposition to their own confession, that there is not a single passage of Scripture to sanction such a practice, it is not so much a matter of surprise that they should disbelieve and reject the plain testimonies of the Holy Ghost, which in these Epistles, are opposed to that impious notion.

We find, then, in the first seven verses of the third chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle giving directions to Timothy (not to the people, mind) respecting the qualifications of a Bishop, or Elder. "This is a true saying. If a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work. A Bishop, then, must be blameless," &c., with a list of the qualifications which Timothy was to think requisite in a candidate for the office of a Bishop. This list, ending with the seventh verse, the Apostle occupies the next six with the qualifications of a Deacon: "Likewise must the Deacons be grave," &c. From this transition of the Apostle from the qualifications of a Bishop to those of a Deacon, it is certain that the office of a Deacon was quite distinct from that of a Bishop. This I know you do not dispute, but in order to make it consistent with your system of Dissent, you contend that the office of a Deacon is a temporal, and not a spiritual office. And if it would make your unscriptural system a little more consistent, you would, I have no doubt, contend that the office of a Bishop, or Elder, was temporal too. And, considering the antipathy you have to the name and Scriptural office of a Bishop, it is not a little surprising that you have not chosen to argue that the office of a Deacon is

spiritual, and that of the Bishop temporal. You could do so with equal propriety, for the qualifications requisite in a Deacon are nearly the same as those requisite in a Bishop, and expressed in almost the same words. Indeed, no impartial and unprejudiced man, after having read what the Apostle has here said about them, can doubt that the office of a Deacon was strictly spiritual, and not temporal: and be it observed, that this is the only place in the Scriptures where any thing at all is said about them; and from this passage we learn, that they were to possess the same character for piety and excellency of general behaviour, as was required in the Bishops, or Elders; which makes it very evident that their office was of the same kind—a spiritual office. They were also probationers for a higher degree in the Ministry of the Church, as they are in the Church of England. “They that have used the office of a Deacon well,” says the Apostle, “purchase to themselves a good degree,” or a higher step. The natural and common-sense meaning of this clearly is, that the office of a Deacon was a spiritual office, and that if they used it well, they purchased to themselves a higher degree in the same spiritual office of the Ministry—namely, the degree of Bishop, or Elder.

These words will admit of no application whatever to a Dissenting Deacon; for should he use his office ever so well, what degree does he purchase to himself? There is just no degree at all for him to purchase. Should you say that he may be called to the office of your Ministry, which is the only even plausible or possible pretext you can urge, I reply, that as the office of your Deacons is avowedly temporal, and that of your Teachers spiritual, it would not be purchasing or receiving a degree in the same office, nor a degree at all in any sense, but a total change—the change of a temporal office for a spiritual, which is evidently quite foreign to the Apostle’s meaning. And with all the sophistry and straining you are master of, you cannot by any possibility adapt the language of the Apostle

to your own crude notions of the office of a Deacon, which are not only destitute of Scriptural proof, but inconsistent with themselves. Even Dissenters themselves, indeed, cannot agree as to the nature of the office. Some affirm that the duty of a Deacon "is to serve tables—the table of the Lord, the table of the Minister, and the table of the poor;" but Mr. James, with equally as much Scriptural proof in his favour, "denies the statement, and affirms, that the table of the poor is the Deacon's appropriate and exclusive duty."* Hence we find Dissenters themselves at issue upon the subject; and though neither side has either produced or can produce a single passage of Scripture in proof of their own peculiar notions, yet both will hypocritically tell us that the *Word of God* is their *only rule* of faith and practice. At any rate, Churchmen may very safely tell Dissenters, that they will certainly adhere to their own opinions until they shall have agreed among themselves.

In contending that the office of a Deacon is temporal, we are generally referred to the Sixth of Acts, where it is recorded, that seven men were chosen to a temporal office, that is, "to serve tables." But then, the reason why these men were chosen, does not now exist. The Christians then threw all their possessions into one general fund, and "had all things common," and these "seven men of honest report" were appointed for the express purpose of managing the common funds of the Christians—of providing the necessary provisions, and of distributing them uprightly and impartially, not to the poor particularly, but to the whole community, for as they had all things in common there were neither poor nor rich among them. But as the Christians soon discontinued the practice of having all things common, the office to which these seven men were chosen ceased to exist as a matter of course, except as some suppose it was the origin of the office of Church-

* James; p. 148.

wardens. And besides, these seven holy men are not once called Deacons by the Sacred Historian, and may therefore, with equal authority, be termed Bishops as Deacons. Their office was created merely for a temporal purpose, and had ceased to exist years before "the office of a Deacon" is ever mentioned in the Word of God. Moreover, the united testimony of those Fathers and blessed Martyrs of the Church who lived in the days of the Apostles, conversed with them, and were ordained by them, and well knew the nature of all the offices of the Church, is decisive in proof of the opinion that "the office of a Deacon" was a spiritual office. And whether these ancient and venerable saints who suffered the most degrading, bitter, and painful deaths, rather than deny the truth, are to be believed in preference to the interested leaders of a new and upstart sect no where to be found in the world till about two hundred years ago, requires very little of either Christian principle or judgment to determine.

I may also remark, that although Dissenters argue so strenuously, that the office of a Deacon is merely temporal, yet so inconsistent is error, that both in word and practice they themselves deny it. Mr. James affirms "that the table of the poor is the Deacon's appropriate and *exclusive* duty;" and yet strange to say, this very same Mr. James declares, "that by the usages of Dissenting Churches," not according to Scripture, the pretended *only* rule of faith, but "by the *usages of Dissenting Churches, many things have been added to the duties of the office beyond its original design.*"* He also says that "Deacons, though their office is *altogether* of a *secular* nature, will be considered by the Minister as his Privy Council in his spiritual government." Now it really does occur to me, that we might read the Scriptures for ever before we should discover any thing to support the idea that Deacons are Spiritual Privy Councillors; but I suppose Mr.

* James, 147.

James considers it sufficiently supported "by the usages of Dissenting Churches," if not, he can easily support it "by the usages" of another Church far more ancient and certainly quite as Scriptural as his own, I mean the apostate Church of Rome. For the Sacred College of Cardinals in conclave, which is in reality the Pope's "Privy Council in his Spiritual Government," is partly composed of Deacons. But Mr. Scales, notorious for his bare and false assertions, and reckless disregard to the Word of God, tells us that the duties of Dissenting Deacons are supported "by the usages of Scripture," without producing a single text in proof of what he asserts. He says, "on them devolves, as we may gather from the history and usages of Scripture," (not from the Scripture itself it seems, but from the USAGES of it, that is the *usages* or *treatment of Scripture by Dissenters*, namely, the *perversion of it*,) "and from the almost uniform tenor of antiquity to manage the temporalities of the Church—to provide for the maintenance of him who labours amongst them in word and doctrine—to receive the stated and voluntary contributions of the members—to distribute their alms amongst the poor—to keep the house of God in repair—to procure things necessary to the orderly administration of Divine (i.e. Dissenting) Ordinances,"* &c. Now here is a list of the duties of a Deacon—all perfect fictions—pure inventions of this man's own brain, which he most wickedly wishes to father upon the Word of God; but let him point out from the Scriptures of Truth, a single passage from which a single one of these pretended duties of a Deacon may be even gathered, much less proved. And yet his book abounds in assertions, that the Bible is his only rule of faith; but who can believe him? Now there are some really spiritual duties performed by the Dissenting Deacon which I never find mentioned by Dissenters, because they would thus condemn their own assertion,

* Scales, p. 194.

that the office of a Deacon is purely temporal. Amongst other things, the Deacons are generally deputed by the members in conclave assembled to examine candidates for Church membership, which is a spiritual affair altogether. Dissenting Deacons, also, always perform the very highest spiritual duty of Dissenting Societies, for they, and not the Minister, always administer the Sacrament to all the members; thus actually in spiritual matters, going beyond even the Minister himself; and yet forsooth, we are ever to be told that the office of a Deacon is only a temporal office. How inconsistent and absurd is error.

The office of a Dissenting Deacon is both inconsistent with their own theory, and utterly destitute of the least shadow of support from the Word of God. It "belongs to the mystery of iniquity, whereunto neither the Scripture nor the practice of the Primitive Churches do give the least countenance. But some think it not inconvenient to *sport themselves* in matters of Church order and constitutions;"* knowing that "by such craft they have their wealth" and "petty distinction." And notwithstanding all the cant we hear about the Scriptural purity of Dissenting Societies, the Dissenting Mr. James candidly acknowledges that abuses of the Deacon's office may be found in his own community. He indignantly asks "what is the Deacon of some of our Dissenting communities? Not simply the laborious, indefatigable, tender-hearted dispenser of the bounty of the Church—the inspector of the poor—the comforter of the distressed. No, but '*the Bible of the Minister, the patron of the living, and the wolf of the flock,*' an individual who thrusting himself into the seat of government, attempts to lord it over God's heritage, by dictating alike to the Pastor and the Members, who thinks that in virtue of his office, his opinion is to be law in all matters of Church Government, whether temporal or spiritual,—

* Dr. Owen on Church Government, 4to. p. 184

who upon the least symptom of opposition to his will, frowns like a tyrant upon the spirit of rising rebellion amongst his slaves! Such men there have been, whose spirit of domination in the Church, has produced a kind of Diaconophobia (i. e. Deacon-horror) in the minds of *many* Ministers, who have suffered most woefully from their bite, and have been led to do without them altogether, rather than be worried any more!! Hence it is, that in some cases the UNSCRIPTURAL PLAN of Committees has been resorted to, that the tyranny of Lord Deacons might be avoided.* Why really these Dissenting Deacons must be terribly queer fellows to *bite and worry* folks: they certainly ought to be prevented, either by drawing their teeth, or muzzling them, for it is such a sad thing to be worried!! And yet I dare say, that these biting Deacons would not be a whit behind their less savage brethren, in affirming that the Scriptures are their only rule of faith and *practice too*. I certainly will not contradict them, but I am inclined to think that biting and worrying are not amongst the duties of a Deacon, for this reason, because St. Paul has not said that a wide mouth and good teeth are necessary qualifications for the office. But after all it seems that, however Scriptural Dissenters contend the office of their Deacons to be, many Ministers "do without them altogether," and some substitute "the *unscriptural plan* of Committees" in their stead. Thus do Dissenters, esteeming themselves wiser than God, boldly reject his wise and Holy Commandments, that they may hold their own traditions, and resort to expedients, and adopt practices which they themselves avow to be unscriptural, and this under the pretence of avoiding the tyranny of their Lord Deacons. But the fact is, the unscriptural principles of Dissent are the fruitful sources not only of this tyranny, but of all the evils of the Dissenting system. And as the Teachers are the means of in-

* James, 146, 147.

stilling those wicked principles into the minds of their poor, deluded people; they really cannot expect the least pity, for they are themselves only suffering under the natural effects of their own principles, and their own instructions. They teach the people disobedience to their duly authorized Ministers, and manifest the greatest ignorance of human nature, in expecting obedience to themselves. They put whips into the hands of the people to scourge the Church, and are generally themselves the first to smart under their lash; and thus do they fall into the very pit which they dig for their neighbours.

Presuming that what has been advanced in reference to Deacons, will be sufficient to satisfy every sincere enquirer after truth that their office was truly spiritual, and that the office or offices of Dissenting Deacons are without any foundation or countenance in the Word of God, I proceed to show that two other spiritual degrees of rank in the Ministry of the Church, answering to the Bishops and Priests of the Church of England, may be clearly proved, and firmly established by the infallible words of Eternal Truth. And if I can prove, from the writings of the Apostles, that some Ministers were superior to others, and were actually invested with authority over them, my point will be gained, and it will be of little consequence what they either were, or are now called.

I begin with St. Paul's commission to Titus—"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."* St. Paul then gives Titus a list of the qualifications which they who desired the office of the Eldership were to possess, and without which no person was to be ordained to that office; and that Titus was alone to be judge as to the fitness of those whom he was to ordain is certain, because the qualifications of candidates were given to

* Titus, i. 5.

him for the express purpose of directing him in his choice of persons for ordination. He is not told to consult the conflicting passions of a Congregation, and to ordain whomsoever they might choose. No: the qualifications given to him by St. Paul were to direct *his* choice, and not that of a Congregation. For if it be right for the people to judge of the qualifications of Ministers, and to choose them, the Holy Ghost (with the greatest reverence I speak it) must have been wrong in influencing St. Paul to give this list of qualifications to Titus, for it most assuredly ought to have been given to the people, and not to Titus. Mr. James takes it for granted that such has been the case, for he says, when it "becomes necessary to elect a new Pastor," "*the MEMBERS should study St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus, to learn what are the qualifications of a Christian Minister.*"* Mr. James must have thought that he was writing to a very stupid set of people, or he might have supposed that they would at once say, "Why, the Apostle certainly did not send those qualifications to the *Members*, to guide *them* in the choice of a Minister, but to Titus, a single individual, and himself a Minister; and, therefore, they are for the direction of a *Minister* in *appointing other Ministers over the people*, and not for the direction of the people in choosing one." Such, however, is an additional instance of the gross perversion of the words of God, to which your Dissenting notions inevitably lead you. You would rather accuse the Holy Ghost of error, than give up your false doctrines. Nothing in the world can be plainer than that Titus, and not the people, was to be the sole judge as to the fitness of the candidates for ordination, and that he was invested with full power and authority either to ordain or reject them, just as he might think proper.

Besides, the Apostle commanded him to "rebuke

* James, p. 226.

with all authority," and to "rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."* Now these persons, whom Titus is here commanded to rebuke, and to rebuke *sharply*,† were Ministers; but in all common sense, what possible right could he have to rebuke these Ministers, much less *sharply*, unless he was superior to them, and they under him? It really is an insult to the commonest understanding, to attempt to make it clearer than these words of Scripture do, that Titus was superior to these Ministers, and that he had supreme power and authority over them, and that they were bound to obey him. Indeed, no man but an Infidel will ever attempt to deny it; and yet, Sir, deny it you must, or otherwise give up your anti-scriptural system of Ministerial equality.

Although I consider my point fully proved, I will corroborate it from the Epistle to Timothy. The Apostle tells Timothy to "lay hands suddenly on no man;"‡ by which he means that he was to use great precaution in ordaining persons to the office of the Ministry: and in order that he might be the better able to determine as to the eligibility of persons to be ordained, the Apostle furnished him with directions, by laying before him the qualifications necessary in a person "desiring the office of a Bishop," or Elder, and also those necessary in a candidate for "the office of a Deacon"—all which are enumerated in the third chapter of his First Epistle. He also commanded him thus: "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."§ All this is utterly unintelligible on the principles of Congregational Independency; for if the right of choosing Ministers belonged to the people, where, in all conscience, would have been the propriety of St. Paul's giving these directions, and lists of the qualifications of Bishops and Deacons, to Timothy? He

* Tit. ii. 15.

† 1 Tim. v. 22.

‡ Ibid i. 13.

§ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

should certainly have given them to the Congregations composing the Church of Ephesus, where Timothy then was, and not to Timothy. But how simple, how clear, and how plain, is the truth!—St. Paul appointed Timothy Superior, or what we now term Bishop of the Church of Ephesus, and gave him authority to ordain Bishops, or Elders, and Deacons, under him: these he was to examine previously to ordaining them. He was to “lay hands suddenly on no man,” and to commit the things that he had received from the Apostle to those *only* whom *he* might judge “faithful men,” and “able to teach others also.” He was, in fact, to be the sole judge as to the meetness of the persons to be ordained to the office of either Bishop or Deacon, and either to ordain or reject them, as he might think proper; and to say that he was not above them, is contrary to common sense—nay, absolutely ridiculous.

But Timothy was also to take cognizance of the *preaching* and *doctrine* of the Ministers at Ephesus: St. Paul says to him “I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”* Now according to the principles of Dissent and the notions of Dissenters, what right had Timothy to command these Ministers what doctrine they were to preach; for if he were not their Superior, and had no authority over them, they had just as much right to command him what doctrine he was to preach as he had them? But they were not only accountable to him for the doctrine they preached, but also for their general moral conduct. “Against an Elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses; them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”† This passage needs not one word of comment, for if it does not, together with those cited above, prove even beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Timothy was invested with full power and supreme

* 1 Tim. i. 3.

† 1 Tim. v. 19, 20.

authority over all the Bishops or Elders, and Deacons of the Church of Ephesus, it is absolutely beyond all the power of human language to prove it. And if any man can possibly believe any thing to the contrary, of the clear and distinct meaning of these passages, he is a very fit subject for Dissent,—for I am sure he will experience no difficulty whatever in receiving all the inconsistencies and absurdities of your iniquitous system.

Having now made it clearly appear from infallible testimony, that Timothy and Titus were superior to other Ministers, and exercised authority over them, and as it is not disputed that the office of a Bishop or Elder is distinct from the office of a Deacon, it inevitably follows that there were three distinct orders or degrees of rank in the Ministry of the Church in the Apostolic age, just as there now are in the Apostolic Church of England. Our Bishops are of the very same order and rank in the Ministry of the Church of Christ, and hold the very identical office which Timothy and Titus and others held. It is of no consequence at all what names they are called by, their office, degree of rank, or order in the Ministry is exactly one and the same. Timothy and Titus held the highest office, and were of the first or highest order or degree of rank in the Ministry of their respective Churches, and were what we now call Bishops. They ordained, and had under them in subjection to their authority, the order of Bishops, or Elders, or Presbyters, who were what we now call Priests by contraction for Presbyters, and the order of Deacons whom we still call Deacons. In this respect, then, those in the Church of England whom we now term Bishops, exactly answer to Timothy and Titus, they hold the highest office, and are of the first or highest order or degree of rank in the Ministry of their respective Diocesan Churches. They ordain, and have under them, in subjection to their authority, the order of Priests, Presbyters, or Elders, who were also in the

Apostolic age in reference to their flocks, termed Bishops ; and the order of Deacons, who now, in the Church of England, if they use "the office of a Deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree," just as they did in the Apostle's days.

It must, indeed, be demonstrative to every man endowed with common sense, and disposed to pay deference to the unerring standard of Truth—the Word of God—that the Episcopal form of Church Government, such as that of the Church of England, is of Apostolic or Divine origin ; and every man at all acquainted with ecclesiastical history, knows well that the same has ever continued down from the very days of the Apostles to the present moment. And I will add, that as it is the form of Government which Christ himself instituted for the regulation of his Church, it will ever continue while he has a Church on earth.

As a proof that the Episcopal form of Church Government was not temporary, and did not cease with the Apostles, but continued in the Church of Christ, we find it in existence above thirty years after St. Paul wrote his Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Christ in his Revelation to his beloved St. John, commanded him to write to the Seven *Angels* of the Seven Churches of Asia, as the supreme and responsible rulers of their respective Churches. The first addressed is the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, "Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus write**** I know thy works and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil ; and thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles and are not, and hast found them liars."* Now we learn from the seventeenth verse of the twentieth of Acts, that there were many Elders in the Church of Ephesus ; and, Sir, the great difficulty for you is to account, upon your own principle of Ministerial equality, for the reason why this short Epistle is addressed to one Minister and not

* Rev. ii. 1, 2.

to all. This is a difficulty which with all your sophistry and straining you can never get over. For this Angel is so clearly acknowledged by the Lord Jesus Christ, as possessing supreme authority over all the other Ministers of the Church of Ephesus, that the blessed Saviour approves of his conduct in the exercise of that authority, in trying some who said they were Apostles, and finding them liars. Indeed, it is certain that Christ would not have termed one of the Ministers of this Church "THE *Angel* of the Church," had he not been superior to all the rest, as his exercise of superior authority abundantly proves.

But we find that the supreme authority over their respective Churches was also possessed by others of these Angels, and without doubt by all of them. "To the Angel of the Church of Pergamos write *** "I have a few things against *thee*, because *thou* hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam;" and "also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which things I hate."* Whence it is clear, that if this Angel had not possessed full power and authority over his Church, Christ could not have blamed him for not exercising that power and authority in excommunicating the persons who held false doctrines. But considering that he had supreme authority over his Church, all is perfectly clear and intelligible: and he was greatly to be blamed for not following the example of the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, in trying and condemning those who held false doctrines, and of excommunicating them.

Again, "Unto the Angel of the Church of Thyatira write *** "I have a few things against thee, because *thou* sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a Prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants."† Here, again, it is as clear as words can possibly make it, that the Angel of this Church had supreme power and authority over it, and over all the Ministers of it,

* Rev. ii. 12, 14, 15.

† Rev. ii. 18, 20.

or the Lord would most assuredly not have blamed him for suffering those to teach who had no right or authority to do so. Such passages as these really need not the least exposition; they are so clear and decisive, that they are more likely to be weakened than strengthened by any comment at all.

The various passages from the New Testament, which I have quoted, and which might have been supported by many others, had it been at all necessary, afford, I conceive, the strongest and most decisive proof that the Episcopal form of Church Government was introduced into the Primitive Churches by the Apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They themselves, during the greater part of their Ministerial career, exercised the chief authority, and ordained Elders and Deacons over the Churches which they respectively planted; and a short time before they left the world, they appointed others to succeed them in the supreme authority and government of the Churches. This we know to have been done by St. Paul; and as all the Apostles were equally under the influence of the Holy Ghost, there can be no doubt that their practice was quite uniform. So that those whom they appointed as their successors, were invested with similar power to themselves; and that there might never be wanting in the Church a succession of faithful Ministers, they were commanded to transmit the same power and authority "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Those who succeeded the Apostles in the chief authority in the Church, were commanded to ordain Priests and Deacons under them—to see that they taught sound doctrine, and to take cognizance of their whole conduct. That Priests, or Elders, and Deacons, were distinct officers in the Church is never disputed; and that an order or office superior to both of them, and such as is now sustained by our Bishops, was instituted by the Apostles, I have, I conceive, fully demonstrated from the Holy Scriptures. And if we turn from the Scriptures to the

writings of the Apostolical Fathers of the Christian Church—I mean those Christian writers who lived in the days of the Apostles, and immediately afterwards—we shall find the clearest possible proof that the same three distinct orders of the Ministry—Bishops, Priests, or Presbyters, and Deacons, continued afterwards to exist in the Church of Christ.

“Ignatius,” who Chrysostom says, “conversed familiarly with the Apostles, and was perfectly acquainted with their doctrine, and had the hands of the Apostles laid upon him,” was appointed Bishop of Antioch during the lives of some of the Apostles, and nearly thirty years before the death of the Apostle John, with whom he was well acquainted. This venerable Bishop and Martyr, who had many Presbyters and Deacons under him at Antioch, wrote while at Smyrna, on his journey to Rome, whither he was going to be thrown to wild beasts to be torn in pieces, four Epistles, one each to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, and Romans. And when he arrived at Troas, he wrote two others, one to the Philadelphians, and the other to the Smyrnæans; and also a particular letter to his beloved Polycarp, then Bishop of Smyrna. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, this holy man after mentioning Burrhas, “his fellow-servant, and their most blessed *Deacon*, in things pertaining to God,”* persuading to obedience, says, to them “that being *subject* to your Bishop (Onesimus) and his Presbytery, ye may be wholly and thoroughly sanctified * * * * For Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father as the Bishops appointed even unto the utmost bounds of the earth are the mind of Jesus Christ. Wherefore, it will become you to run together according to the will of your Bishop, as also ye do. For your famous Presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to its Bishop, as the strings are to their harp. Therefore, in

* (Συνδούλου μου Βούρρου τοῦ κατὰ θεὸν διακόνου ὑμῶν ἐν πᾶσι εὐλογημένου.)

your concord and agreeing charity, Jesus Christ is sung, and every single person among you makes up the chorus : that so being all consonant in love, and taking up the song of God, ye may with one voice, and in a *perfect unity*, sing to the Father by Jesus Christ."*

This same blessed Saint thus affectionately addresses the Magnesians : † " Seeing, then, I have been judged worthy to see you by Damas, your most excellent Bishop, and by your worthy Presbyters, Bassus and Ap-

* " Ἰνα ἐπιτασσόμενοι τῇ ἐπισκόπῳ, καὶ τῇ πρεσβυτερίῳ, κατὰ πάντα ἧτε ἡγιασμένοι * * * καὶ γὰρ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, τὸ ἀδιάκριτον ἡμῶν ζῆν, τοῦ πατρὸς ἡ γνώμη, ὡς καὶ οἱ ἐπίσκοποι οἱ κατὰ τὰ πέρατα ὀρισθέντες ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ γνώμη εἰσίν. Ὅθεν πρέπει ὑμῖν συντρέχειν τῇ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου γνώμῃ, ὅπερ καὶ ποιεῖτε· το γὰρ ἀξιονόμαστον, ὑμῶν πρεσβύτεριον, τοῦ θεοῦ ἄξιον, οὕτως συνήρμωσται τῇ ἐπισκόπῳ, ὡς χορδαὶ κιθάρα· διὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ ὁμονοίᾳ ὑμῶν, καὶ συμφώνῳ ἀγάπῃ, Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ᾄδεται· καὶ οἱ κατ' ἄνδρα δὲ χορὸς γίνεσθαι, ἵνα σύμφωνοι ὄντες ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ χερῶμα θεοῦ λαβόντες, ἐν ἐνότητι ᾄδετε ἐν φωνῇ μιᾷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ πατρὶ."—Vide Epistol. Ignat. apud Coteler. Patr. Apostol. Tom. 2. p. 12. Ed. Sec. Amstel, 1724.

† " Ἐπεὶ οὖν ἡξιώθημεν ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς διὰ Δαμαῦ τοῦ ἀξιοθέου ὑμῶν ἐπισκόπου, καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἀξίων Βάσσου καὶ Ἀπολλωνίου, καὶ τοῦ συνδοῦλου μου διακόνου Σωτίωνος, οὗ ἔγω ὀναίμην, ὅτι ὑποτάσσεται τῇ ἐπισκόπῳ ὡς χαρίτι θεοῦ, καὶ τῇ πρεσβυτερίῳ, ὡς νόμῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Καὶ ὑμῖν δὲ πρέπει μὴ συγχρᾶσθαι τῇ ἡλικίᾳ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου, ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν θεοῦ πατρὸς πᾶσαν ἐντροπὴν αὐτῷ ἀπονέμειν, καθὼς ἔγνωσαν καὶ τοὺς ἁγίους πρεσβυτέρους, οὐ προσηληφόντας τὴν φαινομένην νεωτερικὴν τάξιν, ἀλλ' ὡς φρονίμους ἐν θεῷ συγχωροῦντας αὐτῷ, οὐκ αὐτῷ δὲ, ἀλλὰ τῇ πατρὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῇ πάντων ἐπισκόπῳ εἰς τιμὴν οὖν ἐκείνου τοῦ θελήσαντος ἡμᾶς πρέπον ἐστὶν ἐπακουεῖν κατὰ μηδεμίαν ὑπόκρισιν· ἐπεὶ οὐχ ὅτι τὸν ἐπίσκοπον τοῦτον τὸν βλέπομενον πλανᾷ τις, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἄορατον παραλογίζεται· τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον, οὐ πρὸς σαρκὰ ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ πρὸς θεόν, τὸν τὰ κρυφία εἰδόντα."—Vide Epist. Ignat. ut supra. p. 13. See also Arbp. Wake's Ap. Epistles.

pollonius, and by my fellow-servant Sotio, your Deacon, in whom I rejoyce, forasmuch *as he is subject to his Bishop, as to the grace of God, and to the Presbytery, as to the law of Jesus Christ.* Wherefore, it will become you also not to take advantage of the youth of your Bishop, but to yield all reverence to him, according to the power of God the Father, as also I perceive that your holy Presbyters do; not considering his age, which indeed, to appearance, is young; but as becomes those who are prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bishop of us all. It will, therefore, behove you with all sincerity to obey your Bishop in honour of him whose pleasure it is that you should do so. Because, he that does not do so, deceives not the Bishop whom he sees, but affronts him that is invisible. For, whatsoever of this kind is done, reflects not upon man, but upon God, who knoweth the secrets of our hearts."

From this quotation we find, in the first place, that in the times of Ignatius there were three distinct orders in the Ministry of the Church—Bishops, Presbyters, or Priests, and Deacons; for he mentions expressly Damas the Bishop, Bassus and Appollonius, the Presbyters, and Sotio, the Deacon. In the second place, that the Deacons were of inferior rank to both the Bishops and the Presbyters, being "*subject to the Bishop and to the Presbytery,*" as Sotio, the Deacon; was. In the third place, we find that the Bishop was superior to the Presbyters, for Ignatius says to the Magnesians, "yield all reverence to your Bishop, as also I perceive that *your Holy Presbyters do.*" And in the last place, that whosoever does not obey the Bishop, affronts not particularly the Bishop whom he sees, "*but affronts him that is invisible,*" and "*reflects not upon man, but upon God;*" which perfectly agrees with those important words of our Saviour, "He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me

despiseth him that sent me." Dissenters, therefore, in disobeying and despising the Bishops, within whose jurisdiction the Providence of God may have placed them, despise Christ and Him who sent him.

In another place in this same Epistle, this Primitive Father says, "I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a Divine concord, your Bishop presiding in the place of God; your Presbyters in the place of the Council of the Apostles, and your Deacons most dear to me, being intrusted with the Ministry of Jesus Christ."* Hence we have not only unquestionable proof of the three orders of the Ministry, but also that the office of Deacons was strictly a spiritual office. And this is strikingly confirmed by another passage, where it is expressly said that Deacons "*are not the Ministers of meats and drinks, but of the Church of God.*" I allude to the following quotation, taken from the Epistle of this Blessed Martyr to "the Holy Church which is at Tralles, in Asia," and of which Polybius was Bishop:†—"For, whereas, ye are subject to your Bishop as to Jesus

* "Παραινῶ ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ θεοῦ σπουδάζετε πάντα πράσσειν, προκαθημένον τοῦ ἐπισκόπου εἰς τόπον θεοῦ, καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων εἰς τόπον συνεδρίου τῶν ἀποστόλων, καὶ τῶν διακόνων, τῶν ἐμοὶ γλυκυτάτων, πεπιστευμένων διακονίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ," —9. Vide idem. p. 19.

† "Οἳ γὰρ τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ ὑποτάσσεσθε ὡς Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, φαίνεσθέ μοι ὅτι κατὰ ἀνθρώπινον ζῶντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν· τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς ἀποθανόντα, ἵνα πιστεύσαντες εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ, τὸ ἀποθανεῖν ἐκφύγητε· ἀναγκαῖον οὖν ἔστιν, ὥστε ποιεῖτε, ἄνευ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου μηδὲν πράσσειν ὑμᾶς· ἀλλὰ ὑποτάσσεσθε καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ, ὡς τοῖς ἀποστόλοις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς ἐλπίδος ἡμῶν, ἐν ᾧ διάγοντες εὐεβητώμεθα· δεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς διακόνους ὄντας μυστηρίων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κατὰ πάντα τρόπον πᾶσιν ἀρέσκειν· ὅτι γὰρ βρωμάτων καὶ ποτῶν εἰσὶν διάκονοι, ἀλλ' ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ὑπηρεταί· δέον οὖν αὐτοὺς φυλάσσεσθαι τὰ ἐγκλήματα ὡς πῦρ. Ὁμοίως πάντες ἐντρεπίσθωσαν τοὺς διακόνους ὡς Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν· καὶ τὸν ἐπισ-

Christ ; ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ, who died for us, that believing in his death ye might escape death. It is, therefore, necessary, that, as ye do, without your Bishop you should do nothing. Also be ye subject to your Presbyters, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ our hope ; in whom, if we walk we shall be found in him. The Deacons also being the Ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must by all means study to please all : for *they are not the Ministers of meat and drink, but of the Church of God* ; wherefore, they must avoid all offences as fire. In like manner, let all reverence the Deacons as Jesus Christ, and the Bishop as the Father, and the Presbyters as the Sanhedrim of God, and College of the Apostles—**WITHOUT THESE THERE IS NO CHURCH.**" These last words are of vast importance, particularly to Dissenters ; for in them this Apostolic Bishop *unchurches* all the various sects of schismatics. He says, that all religious communities who are not regularly governed by a regularly ordained Bishop, Presbyters, and Deacons, according to the Apostolic model, do not belong to the Church—are not Churches of Christ ; and it remains for Dissenters to shew, in opposition to this Holy Martyr, what claim they have to be considered as Churches, or as parts of the Catholic or universal Church of Christ.

He says to the Trallians in another place, "I exhort you, therefore, that ye use none but *Christian* nourishment, abstaining from pasture which is of another kind—I mean heresy. For they that are heretics *confound together the doctrine of Jesus Christ with their own POISON, while they seem worthy of belief, as men give a deadly potion mixed with sweet wine, which he who is ignorant of it does with the treacherous*

κοπον, ως ὄντα υἱὸν τοῦ πατρὸς. τοὺς δὲ πρεσβυτέρους ως συνέδριον θεοῦ, καὶ ως σύνδισμον ἀποστόλων· χωρὶς τούτων ἐκκλησία οὐ καλεῖται."—9 Vide ut supra. p. 22.

pleasure, sweetly drink in his own death. Wherefore, guard yourselves against such persons, and that you will do if you are not puffed up; but *continue inseparable* from Jesus Christ our God, and from your Bishop, and from the commands of the Apostles. *He that is within the Altar is pure, but he that is without, that is, he that does any thing without the Bishop and Presbyters, and Deacons, is not pure in his conscience."* In his Epistle to the Magnesians, speaking of those who reject the Bishop and become schismatics, he says, "I can never think *that such as these have a good conscience, seeing they are not gathered together thoroughly according to God's commandment.*" He was, it seems, no very good friend of those who are accustomed to talk so fluently about their "*weak consciences,*" and their "*tender consciences;*" he tells them, that if their own conscience lead them to commit the sin of schism, however tender it may pretendedly be, it is not "*a good conscience.*" In his Epistle to the Ephesians, he cautions them against the soul-destroying sin of schism, or Dissent, in these words "*μηδεις πλανάσθω· ἐὰν μή τις ἡ καὶ κ. τ. λ.*" Let no man deceive himself; if a man be not within the ALTAR, (that is within the pale of the Church) he is deprived of the bread of God; (because no man has or can administer that bread but the duly authorised Bishop, or one appointed by him,) for if the prayer of one or two be of such force, how much more powerful shall that of the Bishop and the whole Church be? He, therefore, that does not come together into the same place (with the Church) is proud, and has already condemned himself. For it is written, "*God resisteth the proud;* let us take heed, therefore, that we do not set ourselves against the Bishop, that we may be the servants of God:" evidently implying that if we do "set ourselves against the Bishop," who may by the Providence of God be placed over us, we cannot be the servants of God.

I could add numerous other quotations, not only

from Ignatius, but also from his contemporaries, Clement, who is so honourably mentioned by St. Paul, in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, and Polycarp, who was the disciple of the Apostle John, by whom he was ordained Bishop of Smyrna. But as those produced are a fair specimen of what might be added, and contain not only the sentiments of Ignatius regarding Episcopacy, but also those of Clement, Polycarp, and of all the Fathers of the first and purest age of the Christian Church, they cannot but be considered amply sufficient, and indeed more than sufficient, by every disinterested and unprejudiced Christian. For when we consider that this holy Saint was himself Bishop of the Church at Antioch nearly forty years, with many Priests and Deacons under him, and that he was intimately acquainted with the Apostles, particularly with the Apostle John, whose disciple he was, and who died only about ten years before him; and that he consequently was well acquainted with their doctrine and manner of proceeding in every particular, as it regarded the government of the Church, his testimony must be considered decisive. The man, indeed, who shall endeavour to invalidate such testimony, and to prove that Episcopacy, or the government of the Church by Bishops, in the sense in which we now understand the terms, was not instituted and established by the Apostles, and exercised and submitted to by the Christian Church in its first times, and in every succeeding age, may with equal propriety and show of argument, attempt to deny that Jesus Christ himself ever appeared on earth.

I now pass on to Ireneus, who flourished shortly after Ignatius, and who was first Priest and afterwards Bishop of Lyons, in France.* He says, "We are able to number up those who by the Apostles were

* The ingenious reader will be struck with the crafty devices by which modern Dissenters attempt to prop up their system. A Mr. William Jones has published a History of the Church, in which he has Dissenterised, as far as he durst, the Primitive Churches of Christ, and their transactions. But as truth is so very powerful, she has sometimes got the

made Bishops in their several Churches, and their successors to this time." "Polycarp was not only instructed by the Apostles, and acquainted with many of those who saw our Lord, but was also by the Apostles made Bishop of the Church of Smyrna, in Asia, whom I also saw when I was young."* Tertullian, who lived about the same time, writing against certain Heretics, who presumptuously pretended that they had derived their notions from the Apostles, says, "Let them, therefore, show the origin of their Church, let them exhibit the order of their Bishops so succeeding each other from the beginning, that the first Bishop had for his author and predecessor, some one of the Apostles, or of those Apostolical men who persevered

mastery of this Dissenter, and made him contradict himself in HIS History, which would have been more properly styled—"A vain and unsuccessful attempt to discover the existence of Congregational Independency, at any time, or in any place, during the first fifteen hundred years of the Christian era. This Mr. Jones is a Baptist, and as the Baptist Teachers are generally called "PASTORS," he has, in speaking of the Bishops of the earliest Churches, denominated them "PASTORS." Hence we read in the book of Ignatius, one of the PASTORS of the Church at Antioch—of Simeon, who succeeded the Apostle James as PASTOR of the Church at Jerusalem;—of Quadratus, PASTOR of the Church at Athens;—of Polycarp, PASTOR of the Church at Smyrna; of Melito, PASTOR of the Church at Sardis;—of Pothinus and Irenæus, PASTORS of the Church at Lyons, &c. &c. The good man had very probably an idea that some, if not most of his readers, would very naturally conceive that the word PASTOR, when applied to such as Ignatius, Polycarp, &c. meant the very same as it does when applied to the Teachers of their own Conventicles.—See Vol. I. p. 234, 236, 241, 243, 246, &c.

In reference to the word "Priest," also Dissenters continually insist that it means a "sacrificer," and insinuate that it is used in that sense by the Church of England; whereas every body who has the least knowledge of Greek knows perfectly well, that the word neither is nor can be derived from "ιερευς," sacerdos, or a sacrificer; but that it is derived from the Greek word "πρεσβυτερος," Presbyter, Prester, Preste, Priest, or Elder, and that it is never used by the Church to signify the second order of the Ministry, and never in the sense of a sacrificer. And if Dissenters have not Greek enough to know what the word is derived from, nor what its meaning is when applied to a Minister of the Church of England, surely they might be contented after having been so repeatedly told. The fact, however, is—"a keen hatred" of the Church must be kept up, by some means or other, to keep Dissent on its legs; and consequently Dissenters are obliged to pick up any thing they can to serve their pious purpose, and to satisfy their "tender consciences." And if they were not to resort to such petty, childish trifling, which can only excite the pity of sensible people, they would have just nothing at all to cavil about, and to furnish fuel for their "keen hatred and round abuse of the Church."—See Vol. I. p. 234, 236, 241, 243, 246, &c.

* Lib. 3, cap. 3.

with the Apostles; for in this manner Apostolical Churches assert their rights; thus the Church of Smyrna has Polycarp, who was placed there by John; the Church of Rome has Clement, who was ordained by Peter; and other Churches show other persons, who by being placed in the Bishoprics by the Apostles, transmitted the Apostolic seed."* He also says, upon another occasion—"When your Captains, that is to say, the Deacons, Presbyters, and Bishops, fly, who shall teach the laity that they must be constant."†

Again, speaking of Baptism, he says, "The High Priest, who is the Bishop, has the chief right of administering it, then the Presbyters and Deacons, but not without the authority of the Bishop."‡ Optatus, another Christian Father writes—"To what purpose should I mention Deacons, who are in the third, or Presbyters, in the second degree of Priesthood, when the very heads and Princes of all, even certain of the Bishops themselves, were content to redeem life with the loss of heaven."§ In the tenth canon of the Council of Sardis, which was held in the year 347, is the following passage:—"Every degree of holy orders requires a considerable length of time wherein the faith of the ordained persons, his morals, his firmness, and his moderation, may be known; for it is not proper, nor is it consistent with the necessary knowledge and good conversation, that a person should be rashly and lightly appointed a Bishop, or Priest, or Deacon." To these positive authorities, which might be greatly increased, both by earlier and later writers of the Christian Church, it may be added, that Episcopal power was not once called in question in the first three centuries. And it is only a wonder, or rather a striking evidence of the wickedness of these latter times, that any man can be found so unreasonable as to imagine that a few interested and ambitious men, living nearly eighteen hundred years after the Blessed Apostles, are

* De Præsc. adv. Hær., &c. See Bishop Tomline on 23rd Art.

† De Fugas in Persec.

‡ De Bapt. cap. 17.

§ Lib. I.

better able to judge as to the form of Church Government instituted and practised by the Apostles, than those holy and disinterested Saints who lived in the very days of the Apostles, conversed with them, and were themselves ordained by them, and hesitated not to shed their blood in defence of the truth. You cannot deny, Sir, with any show of argument, that the existence of the three distinct orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and the superiority of Bishops in the Government of the Church, were not once called in question till towards the end of the fourth century, when an ambitious Monk, named Aerius, a Presbyter, or Priest, and an Arian, mortified at being disappointed of the Bishopric of Sebastia, in Pontus, immediately wrote against Episcopacy, contending that Presbyters were equal to Bishops, determined as he could not raise himself to the dignity of a Bishop, to bring that dignity to a level with his own. He was, notwithstanding, forced to acknowledge that Bishops had existed as a distinct order, and as the Governors of the Church, from the very days of the Apostles to his own times; and, for centuries after, his singular opinions met with not a single advocate. "It seems, therefore, as clear as written testimony can make it, that Bishops were appointed by the Apostles, that there were three distinct orders of Ministers, namely, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in the Primitive Church, and that there has been a regular succession of Bishops from the Apostolic age to the present time, and we may safely challenge the enemies of Episcopacy to produce evidence of the existence of a single ancient Independent (not also Congregational) Church which was not governed by a Bishop."*

You know well, Sir, that it is absolutely impossible for you to mention a single Church whose government was not Episcopal before the days of Calvin. And even that great man himself honestly allowed that no

* Vide Bishop Tomline on 23rd Art.

Christian Church could be found during the first fourteen hundred years after Christ without a presiding Bishop. Besides, although Calvin set on foot the Presbyterian scheme, he as well as other Foreign Protestants, would gladly have abandoned it for Episcopacy, had not their excellent design been frustrated by the Papists of that time, more especially by those inhuman wretches, Gardiner and Bonner. The great historian Strype says, "That the Foreign Protestants took such great joy and satisfaction in this good King (viz. Edward VI.) and his establishment of religion, that Bullinger, Calvin, and others in a letter to him, offered to make him their Defender, and to have Bishops in their Churches as there were in England, with a tender of their service to assist and unite together. This nettled the learned at the Council of Trent, who came to the knowledge of it by some of their Private Intelligencers, and they verily thought that all the Heretics, as they called them, would now unite among themselves and become one body, receiving the same discipline exercised in England: which, if it should happen, and they should have Heretical Bishops near them in those parts, they concluded that Rome and her Clergy would utterly fall. Whereupon were sent two of their emissaries from Rotterdam into England, who were to pretend themselves Anabaptists and preach against baptizing infants, and preach up re-baptizing, and a fifth Monarchy upon earth. And besides this, one D. G. authorised by these learned men (the Popish Synod at Trent), despatched a letter, written in May, 1549, from Delft, in Holland, to two (of the Popish deprived) Bishops, whereof (Gardiner Bishop of) Winchester was one, signifying the coming of these pretended Anabaptists, and that they should receive them, and cherish them, and take their parts if they should chance to receive any checks, telling them that it was left to them to assist in this cause, and to some others whom they knew to be well affected to

the Mother Church.”* Calvin afterwards sent over another letter, in which he more fully proposed the adoption of Episcopacy in his own Churches, and the union of all the Protestants; but unhappily, this letter was craftily intercepted by the two Popish Bishops, Gardiner and Bonner, who maliciously and fraudulently forged a surly, snappish answer, which so disgusted Calvin, that he, supposing it had been sent by some of the English Protestant Divines, dropped all thoughts of his wished for Episcopacy and union. However, soon after the glorious accession of Elizabeth, he wrote another letter upon the same subject, in 1560, to Dr. Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, in which he expressed his joy “that God had raised up so gracious a Queen to be instrumental in propagating the true faith of Jesus Christ, by restoring the Gospel and expelling idolatry, together with the Bishop of Rome’s usurped power. Calvin then made a serious motion of uniting Protestants together, as he had done before in King Edward’s reign. He intreated the Archbishop to prevail with her Majesty to summon a General Assembly of all the Protestant Clergy where-soever dispersed, and that *a set form* (of Public Service) and method (of Church Government) might be established, not only in her dominions, but also among all the Reformed and Evangelical Churches abroad.” “This,” says Strype, “was a great work, and created serious thoughts in the Archbishop’s mind for the framing a proper method to set it on foot: but he had considered but a little while of these matters, when news arrived at Court, that Calvin was dead.”† Thus of course, the matter ended. The Historian adds, “How Calvin stood affected in the said point of Episcopacy, and how readily and gladly he and other heads of the reformed Churches would have received it, is evident enough from his writings and epistles. In

* Strype’s Memorials of Cranmer, p. 207, 203.

† Strype’s Life of Archbishop Parker, p. 69.

his Book of the necessity of reforming the Church he hath these words, ' Talem si nobis Hierarchiam exhibeant,' &c. Let them give us such a Hierarchy in which Bishops may be so above the rest as they refuse not to be under Christ, and depend upon him as their only head ; that they maintain a brotherly society, &c. *if there be any that do not behave themselves with all reverence and obedience towards them, THERE IS NO ANATHEMA, BUT I CONFESS THEM WORTHY OF IT.*"* Now, as Calvin so highly approved not only of our excellent Church, but also of her Scriptural form of Government, which he would fain have introduced into his own Churches, and as these are his own words, you and all your turbulent faction stand condemned by this great and good man for your causeless separation from the Church of England—he confesses that you deserve the greatest curses, and had your sect been in existence in his days, I have no doubt that that strong-minded and heroic reformer would have bestowed his maledictions upon you pretty liberally for your schismatical conduct. But Robert Brown, your father and founder was scarcely born, and your opinions entirely unheard of in Calvin's days. Another quotation from this learned man shall suffice. Speaking of the government of the Primitive Church by Bishops, &c. he observes, " This kind of Government, some call Hierarchia, an improper name. But if omitting the name, we consider the thing itself, we shall find that these old Bishops did not frame any other kind of Government in the Church from that which the Lord hath prescribed in his Word."† Thus has the great and honest Calvin borne his positive testimony to the Divine origin of Episcopacy.

The desire of the Foreign Protestant Churches for the Episcopal form of Church Government, however, did not expire with Calvin. This is evident from a remarkable passage written by Bishop Carleton, one

* Strype's Hist. Ref. under Queen Elizabeth, chap. 21, p. 246.

† Ib. p. 70.

of the representatives of the Church of England at the Synod of Dort, held in 1618. The passage is this—"When wee," says the Bishop, speaking of himself and his associates who attended that Synod, "were to yeeld our consent to the Belgic confession at Dort; I made open protestation in the Synode, that whereas in that confession there was inserted a strange conceit of the parity of Ministers to be instituted by Christ, I declared our dissent utterly in that point. I showed; that, by Christ a parity was never instituted in the Church. And herein I appealed to the judgment of antiquity and to the judgment of any learned man now living; and craved herein to be satisfied, if any man of learning could speak to the contrary. (My Lord of Salisbury is my witnesse, and so are all the rest of our company, who spake also in the same cause.) To this there was no answer made by any. Whereupon wee conceived that they yeelded to the truthe of the protestation. And somewhat I can say, of my own knowledge, for I had conferences with divers of the best learned in that Synode, I told them that the cause of all their troubles was this, that they had not Byshops among them, who by their authoritie might repress turbulent spirits that broached novelties. Their answer was, that they did much honour and reverence the good order and discipline of the Church of England; and with all their hearts would be glad to have it established among them, but that could not be hoped for in their state. Their hope was, that seeing they could not doe what they desired, God would be merciful to them if they did what they could. This was their answer. The truthe is, they groane under that burden (of Ministerial equality), and would be eased if they could. This is well knowne to the rest of my associates there."* These people, Sir, were labouring under the same miseries of distraction and division

* Bishop Carleton's Examination of Montagu's Pelagian and Arminian Appeal, &c. pp. 111, 112. Lond. 1626.

which you now so deservedly suffer, and which bids fair to destroy your very existence.

The unprejudiced testimony of the learned Le Clerc, a Divine of the Presbyterian Church of Holland, cannot but be of value here. He says, "I have always professed to believe that Episcopacy is of Apostolical institution, and consequently very good and very lawful; that man had no manner of right to change it in any place, unless it was impossible otherwise to reform the abuses that crept into Christianity; that it was justly preserved in England where the Reformation was practicable without altering it; that, therefore, the Protestants in England and other places where there are Bishops, do very ill to separate from that discipline; that they would still do much worse in attempting to destroy it in order to set up Presbytery, fanaticism, and anarchy. Things ought not to be turned into chaos, nor people seen every where, without a call, and without learning, pretending to inspiration. Nothing is more proper to prevent them than Episcopal discipline, as by law established in England, especially when those that preside in Church government are persons of penetration, sobriety, and discretion." It is, indeed, a matter of positive fact, that the greater and more learned part of the original framers of the Presbyterian form of government, such as Calvin, Beza, Bullinger, Zanchius, and others, pleaded necessity alone for the adoption of their new scheme, and would gladly have adopted Episcopacy had it been by any means possible.

Moreover, if we turn to the Syrian Church, in the East, and to the Waldensian Church, in the West, additional and satisfactory proof is afforded of the divine origin of Episcopacy. Neither of these Churches ever submitted to the Romish Pontiff. The Waldensian Church, which has always opposed the innovations of the Apostate Church of Rome, and which has been almost miraculously preserved from the corruptions, and amidst the cruel persecutions to which its

members have been so frequently exposed, retained the purity of the faith, and was Episcopal from the days of the Apostles down to 1630; when the plague raged so dreadfully among them that it cut off most of the inhabitants, and all the Clergy except two. These two, who were the most aged, being left alone, were obliged on account of an edict, preventing them from educating their youth at San Giovanni at home, to send to Geneva and Lausanne for Presbyterian Ministers, who carrying their unhallowed notions with them, introduced Presbyterianism into a Church which had previously ever been Episcopal.* The existence also of the Syrian Church, in the East, as an Episcopal Church, enjoying a Scriptural Liturgy, and deriving her Episcopal form of government from the earliest and purest ages of Christianity, affords another strong and striking proof of the Divine and Apostolic origin of Episcopacy.

To the undeniable testimonies, and stubborn and incontrovertible arguments, which have been produced in proof and support of Episcopacy, or the government of the Church by Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, I could add many others; but enough I am sure has been advanced to convince any man who is sincerely desirous of embracing the truth, or not absolutely determined not to see it. You hate tithes, I know, probably for the same reason for which the fox disliked the grapes—but you would be glad of the tenth of the tithe of such decisive evidence in support of your unscriptural system of Congregational Independency, I have shown, beyond the power of your contradiction, that no such a system as that you advocate has any foundation in the Word of God. You may, indeed, just as easily prove, from the Holy Scriptures, that all the metamorphoses, or all the nonsensical fables of the Heathen Mythologists are true, as your new-fancied system of Dissent. Compared with the Scrip-

* See Gilly's History of the Vaudois or Waldenses.

tures, they are equally as true, and manifest their authors to have possessed far more ingenuity than the inventor of Congregational Independency. And with regard to historical testimony, not a shadow of proof can you produce from the whole stream of ecclesiastical history, flowing down from the very days of the Saviour, to those of that hot-headed fanatic Robert Brown, of whom, however, Independents are generally ashamed, though with but little reason. You cannot point out the existence of a single Church, following your mode of pretended government, during the first fifteen hundred years after Christ: neither can you produce, during all that time, a single instance of an ordination to the Ministry of the Church which was considered as valid, if not performed by a Bishop. No mode, therefore, of Church government, except the Episcopal, and no mode of ordination except by a Bishop, have any claim whatever to the sanction of the Primitive Churches of Christ, or the Word of God, or any claim whatever upon the consciences, or to the obedience, of Christians. As the Episcopal is the only form of government instituted by God, through the medium of his inspired Apostles, for the regulation of his Church, no other ought to be obeyed, or can be obeyed without great wickedness. Obedience to any other amounts, in fact, to the rejection of Christ, as King and Head of the Church. And, I am at a loss to imagine, what claim persons who did not submit to that particular mode of government and discipline laid down by the Saviour, can have to the title of Christians. A Christian is one who bows to the authority, institutions, and commands of Christ, and he who does not do so cannot be a Christian. Leaving Religion out of the question, no man of sense would ever imagine that the Lord has left the important matter of Church discipline to be settled according to the wild notions and vagaries of any hot-headed fanatical pretender to inspiration, having nothing but his own selfish ends in view. Christ has given in

the Sacred Record, directions for the government of his Church to the end of time, and it is the imperative duty of every professing Christian to obey them. Just before he left the world, in virtue of his own power over all things in heaven and in earth, he committed to his blessed Apostles, authority to put his directions into execution, and to rule his Church, with a gracious and encouraging promise, that he would be with them always, even unto the end of the world. His meaning could not be, that he would be with the Apostles, strictly speaking, because he knew they would not exist to the end of the world. He evidently meant that he would be with them and their representatives—those to whom they should transmit that authority which they had themselves received from him. He does not promise that he will be with any but *with them*,—that is with those who should be their regular successors, ordained to the office by the laying on of hands: and even with such he will not be for their own sakes, but for the sake of the office which they sustain, because that office is of his own appointment. They exercise their authority, and perform all ecclesiastical offices—such as preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, not in their own name, but in virtue of their *office*, and in the sacred name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Christ committed authority to his Apostles, to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments. The Apostles committed the same authority to Timothy, Titus, Ignatius, Clement, and others, and commanded them to commit the same to men whom they should judge faithful, which they accordingly did, and which others after them have ever since continued to do. And thus that authority which Christ committed to his Apostles has been transmitted down, from one to another in regular succession, to the present time. And the Clergy of the Apostolical Church of England, having received their authority in this way—in a direct line of succession from Christ, the fountain

of all authority, to his Church, they are the legitimate and authorised Ministers of Christ amongst us, and he who despiseth them despiseth Christ, and he who despiseth Christ despiseth him that sent him.

I am,

Sir,

Once more,

Your most obedient Servant,

L. S. E.

LETTER VI.

ON THE ORDINATION OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS.

SIR,

I am aware that you offer as an objection, that although the Clergy of the Church of England have received their Ordination in a regular, uninterrupted line of succession from the Apostles, they have received it through the corrupt channel of the Church of Rome. This, however, admitting it to be the case, which may perhaps be questioned, is not of the slightest consequence. The impurity of the channel neither did nor could corrupt the Ordinance itself, or render it a whit the less valid. Of this the Scripture affords sufficient proof. For our Saviour himself acknowledged Caiaphas to be the High Priest; and Caiaphas even prophesied as such, although he was a wicked man, and had received consecration to the office through as corrupt a channel as possible. For the High Priesthood had frequently been bought and sold, and obtained by the greatest corruption and bribery. It had also become an annual office instead of an office for life, and was no longer continued to the head of Aaron's family, as the Lord had commanded. Nevertheless, Caiaphas having been ordained or consecrated to the office, was the High Priest; and in virtue of his *office*, he prophesied,

and *not of himself*. St. Paul also acknowledged Ananias, a successor of Caiaphas, as God's High Priest, and quoted a passage of Scripture, condemning himself for having reviled him, though he had done so unknowingly, and though the office, along with the Jewish dispensation, had been virtually abolished by the death of Christ, the High Priest's great Anti-type. Christ also recognized the authority of the Scribes and Pharisees, and commanded his followers to obey them because they sat "in Moses's seat."* Judas, also, was chosen by Christ in person, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil."† Christ was neither deceived nor mistaken with regard to the character of Judas; and yet he chose him, devil as he was, and Ordained him to the Apostolic office, in virtue of which he went and both preached the Gospel and performed miracles: and notwithstanding his own diabolical character, the acts he performed were equally as valid as those performed by other Apostles, because he performed them, not in virtue of his own character, nor in his own name, but in virtue of his office as an Apostle, and in the name of Christ. The corruption of the channel, therefore, through which a benefit or Ordinance of God's appointment may be conveyed, does not at all affect the validity of such Ordinance. The validity of Ordination, or of the performance of any other spiritual function, so far as the officiating person is concerned, is not dependent on the moral character of that person, but on his being duly appointed of God. Besides, if I turn round upon you, and make use of your own objection against yourself, you will immediately deny the force of it. For example, I know a Dissenting Teacher, who was for some years the Minister of a large Independent Meeting-house, with a "flowing Congregation," and a large and increasing number of Members; he was considered an eloquent Preacher; I have myself heard him preach what are termed "melting sermons,"

* Matt. 23. 2.

† John 6. 77.

and have seen the tears run down his face in the pulpit. Now this man, though he was at the very time of shameful conduct, of course administered what you call the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to a great number of persons; and the question is, do you think that the persons whom he baptized whilst he was a wicked man were properly baptized, or not? If not—if the badness of his character destroyed the validity of the Ordinance, they ought most assuredly to have been baptized over again. But was that the case? Certainly not; such a thing was never thought of—their baptism was considered perfectly valid. You do, therefore, yourselves fully allow that the wickedness of the person who performs your Ordinances does not destroy the validity of those Ordinances; and consequently “wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things.”* Besides, on the same principle on which you object to Episcopal succession, because it came through the Church of Rome, you should, to be consistent, also object to the Bible itself, for that has descended down to us through the same channel.

Indeed, if sterling goodness in a person who administers an Ordinance, or performs any spiritual function, were absolutely necessary to render such Ordinance or performance effectual and valid, we should never know when it was effectual and valid, and when it was not. There could be no certainty, for whilst the outward conduct of the administrator might be such as to induce us to believe him to be a real Christian, in his heart he might be as wicked as possible: and this, as God looks at the heart, would destroy the validity of the Sacraments quite as effectually as outward and open wickedness. If the wickedness of the administrator nullified the Ordinances or Sacraments of religion, half the true children of God might pass through the world without ever receiving

the Sacraments at all. For not being able to discern the hearts of those who administered them, they would frequently, and might always be deceived, thinking they had received the Sacraments, when in reality they had not received them, the concealed wickedness of the administrators having rendered them null and void. Every Christian upon the truth of this supposition would necessarily require the gift of discerning spirits, that he might be able to know whether a Minister was capable of administering the Sacraments properly or not. It is, however, and happily so for the people of God, a clear and certain truth, that the character of a Minister does not at all affect the validity and efficacy of the Sacraments or Ordinances of religion, for he is nothing more than a mere instrument—"an earthen vessel;" the power is entirely of God, in whose name, and by whose commission and authority he acts. As, therefore, the corruption of the channel through which an Ordinance or Sacrament may be received, does not at all affect the validity or efficacy of the Ordinances or Sacraments which pass through it; the Clergy of the Church of England are lawfully commissioned and authorised Ministers of the Church of Christ, having received their commission and authority directly from Christ himself, strictly according to the regular course of his over-ruling and all-wise Providence.

Christ being the King and Head of the Church, all authority and power descend from him, and must be received before it can be exercised or transmitted to another. It must, in fact, be received as it was by the Apostles, and their immediate successors, with power to transmit it to others. And as "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the *better*," so no man may preach the Gospel or administer the Sacraments without first receiving authority to do so from those who themselves possess it, and have power to confer it. Neither can any one receive it from a Layman, or from a Minister, who himself received it either imme-

diately or in succession from a Layman, and such Ordination be valid : for any intervention of an unauthorised person destroys the continuity of transmission—breaks the chain of succession, and completely invalidates the commission. No person or persons whatever, therefore, who have not received commission and authority in regular and uninterrupted succession from the Apostles of Christ, have any right whatever to preach the Gospel, or to administer the Sacraments. And, indeed, whatever may be their pretensions, they cannot authoritatively do either. They may “transform themselves into Ministers of righteousness,” and ape the true Ministers of Christ, but their preaching has no authority that a Scriptural Christian can recognise ; and what they wish to pass off as the Sacraments of Christ, are nothing more than ceremonies of their own—mere imitations of the true Ordinances of Christ, and really no Sacraments at all.

Feeling fully convinced of this as a truth, and having been baptized as *you* consider it by you, and having repeatedly received what you term the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper from you, and considering that such pretended Sacraments, not being administered under and in virtue of the authority of Christ, were not valid, in consequence of your being destitute of that authority, I do now express my sincere regret for ever having taken a part in such mockery and profaneness, believing it as I do, to be nothing short of the very essence of spiritual rebellion against the Church of Christ, and against Christ himself as the Head of the Church. But I humbly hope “to obtain mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief,” and I pray that God in his great mercy, would be pleased to open the eyes of all, particularly of those well-meaning Dissenters, who although unwarily deceived by the sophistical argumentation, and led astray into the dangerous paths of Heresy and Schism by the earnestness of the persuasions of their Teachers, and blind to the wicked errors of Dissenterism, are never-

theless desirous of knowing the truth and of living in accordance with it. Such persons I feel persuaded, were the truth clearly laid before them, would liberate themselves from the enslaving trammels of Dissent, and immediately embrace it. I speak deliberately and advisedly, when I say that not a single day passes over my head, but I lift up my heart with feelings of devout gratitude and thankfulness to God, for having shown me the wickedness of Dissent and Schism, and for leading me into the paths of truth and consistency. I may also remark, that conceiving you to be destitute of any authority to administer the Sacraments, and that the Baptism wherewith I had been baptized by you was no more than a kind of mock-baptism, I solicited a short time since, after giving the subject the fullest consideration, entrance into the Church of Christ, and was admitted by being properly baptized by a duly authorised Minister of Christ, and am, therefore, now what I had before no right to consider myself—a Member of the *visible* Church of Christ.

You will perceive, from what has been just stated, that I do not believe your Societies to be Churches of Christ, or their Members Disciples of Christ—or in other words Christians—any more than I consider your Teachers Ministers of Christ. Your Societies, or Churches as you term them, not being constituted according to the laws of Christ laid down in his Word, as has been evinced, and, therefore, not in subjection to his authority, can have no right to be called Christian Churches or Christian Societies. They are neither a part nor parts of the visible Church of Christ; and, in consequence, can lay no claim to those blessings which God in the Gospel has promised to the Church,—of those blessings Christ is the grand, inexhaustible fountain, and he dispenses them in his fold the Church, to every one of his sheep, by the hands of his appointed shepherds. I cannot see how, in what way, or by what means, Dissenters can at all lay claim to be considered as Christians. Christians are those who

submit to the laws and authority of Christ—in other words, those who belong to the Church of Christ ; but Dissenters, by separating from the Church, turn their backs upon her, and thus reject her and her Ministers ; and through them Christ himself. The Church is the true ark—the means which God has appointed for the salvation of his people ; and those who forsake her, and refuse to be saved in the way of God's appointment, and set about making new Churches and constructing new ways of salvation for themselves, and are determined to be saved only in the ways of their *own* appointment, must be considered in a state the most awfully dangerous. I dare not for the world venture the salvation of my own soul upon any of the *numerous experiments* of the manifold sects of modern schismatics. I conceive it abundantly more safe to be found walking in the *old* paths—the paths which our forefathers have trodden before us, and which have safely led the faithful and true of every age to the haven of eternal rest. They all belonged to the Church of Christ ; and our Blessed Saviour, in the directory which he has graciously given us, has repeatedly cautioned us against Schism and Dissent, and against being led astray by false Prophets and false Teachers—wolves in sheep's clothing—Ministers of Satan, who transform themselves as Ministers of righteousness. They may put on the appearance of being very pious and holy men ; they may dress themselves in sheep's clothing, but still they are wolves by nature ; they may transform themselves into Ministers of righteousness, and make such great pretensions as to deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect—but they are Ministers of Satan still. And the higher their pretences, and the more plausible their appearance, and the greater the quantity of truth which they mix up with their own deadly poison, in order that people may the more unsuspectingly swallow it, the more cautious and wary ought we to be, lest we imbibe the deadly draught.

I wish to speak upon this subject with becoming sobriety and reverence; considering the numerous sects of Schismatics of almost every shade of difference, it is a serious and solemn subject. And when it is considered that those who are nearest and dearest to me upon earth are at this moment Dissenters, it must be supposed that my own feelings are in no trifling degree interested. Nevertheless, I cannot at all perceive where else the line of demarcation can be drawn, or what other view I can take of the subject with any degree of either truth or consistency. I should be glad to take a more favourable view of the matter if it could be borne out with the truth of God's Holy Word; but having paid all the attention to the subject of which I am at all capable, I am constrained to say that I do not see how that can be the case; I shall be glad to be shown. Dissenters may, some of them, possibly belong to the *invisible* Church; with that, however, as we cannot discern spirits, we have nothing to do. They, by their schism, cut themselves off from the *visible* Church, and cannot, therefore, expect to be considered as Christians, but according to the command of Christ as Heathens and Publicans. In a Christian point of view we have nothing to do with them—we must leave them entirely in the hands of God—they are without the pale of the *visible* Church of Christ, and we are to act in the spirit of what the Apostle says, "What have I to do to judge them also that are *without*? them that are *without* God judgeth."* The curse of God appears to me to rest heavily upon them. Every degree of heresy, and false doctrine, and wickedness of practice, together with numerous discords, distractions, quarrellings, and divisions, seems to be in existence amongst them. They afford Infidels an argument against religion; Papists an argument against Protestantism; and disorderly Churchmen a refuge from Godly discipline. Surely such evils connected with

* 1 Cor. v., 12, 13.

their existence, ought to serve as beacons to warn the true Christian mariner, carefully to guard against such dangerous rocks and quicksands.

Dissenters are, in fact, as recent occurrences have most clearly evinced, no more than a sort of religious-political clubs, having for their object the destruction of the Established Church, and afterwards of the State, that they may revel in their spiritual and civil republicanism. They and the Political Unions have the same objects in view, and only make use of different means to accomplish those objects. The Dissenters aim at the destruction of the Church, knowing that the destruction of the State would immediately follow. The Political Unions aim at the destruction of the State, well aware that if they attain their object in this respect, the Church will give them but little trouble afterwards. In this work of destruction we discover Dissenting Teachers amongst the very foremost of the ringleaders, drawing on the people to discontent, and confusion. The people, I am satisfied, are not aware of the ambitious projects and airy dreams of their Teachers, or they would soon leave them to themselves, and would disdain to be made their tools for the accomplishment of their objects of pride and self-interest. Notwithstanding all this, these Teachers have the *modesty* to tell us that they are not of that kingdom which is of this world—that they are very pious and holy men—men of very *weak* and “*tender* consciences”—that their Churches are Churches of “Saints”—and that they themselves are really and truly Ministers of the Gospel—super-eminently pious and godly, and have at heart, above all things, the spiritual and eternal welfare of immortal souls. But, Sir, truth constrains me to tell you, that you are *not* Ministers of the Gospel, but Ministers of Heresy and Schism—you are not the servants of Christ, chosen by him, but the servants and hirelings of your hearers, chosen and paid by them—you have received no commission or authority from Christ—but from your people, who

Scripturally have none to give—you are not under the authority of Christ, but under the authority of your people, who have presumptuously usurped the authority of Christ; and you are equally as wicked as they for submitting to their “mob-government”*—to be the slavish hirelings of a “mob”—in direct opposition to truth, in direct opposition to reason, and in direct opposition to the dictates of your own consciences.

The Dissenting Mr. James confesses, that “no case occurs in the Inspired History where it is mentioned that a Church elected its own Pastor,” which is a certain truth, and consequently a demonstrative proof that the Primitive Churches possessed no authority to do so; for had they possessed it, they would undoubtedly have exercised it when Ministers were to be appointed over them, but this was not done in one single instance. And in all the Word of God there is not the slightest intimation of commission or authority to examine, choose, ordain, appoint, or oversee Ministers, being given to any collective body of men whatever; and therefore neither an Assembly of unordained Ministers,—nor a union of ignorant, upstart, religious fungusses,—nor a Board of Congregational Teachers—nor a Club of Independents, has any right or authority from Christ to examine, choose, ordain, appoint, or oversee Ministers. And in claiming and exercising a pretended authority, such Societies do rob the Saviour of his due honour—wrest the sceptre of government from his hand—snatch the crown from his head—thrust him off from his throne, and impiously usurp his place and authority. In the Scriptures, we find that Christ delegated authority to examine, choose, ordain, appoint, and oversee Ministers, not to any company of persons, but to single individuals, as he did to his Apostles, and to Timothy, and Titus, and others, through them. And all who have not been regularly ordained by those who now hold by delega-

* See Remarks, p. 9.

tion from Christ and his Apostles, the same office which Timothy, and Titus, Clement, Ignatius, and others held, are intruders and impostors. And every person before he entrusts such with the care of his soul, has a right to demand proof to the contrary, and should always do so, the imposture would thus be immediately detected.

There are only two ways in which persons can become Ministers of the Gospel,—the ordinary and the extraordinary. The ordinary way is that of regular ordination, by which the persons receive authority to preach and administer the Sacraments, from those who have themselves received Ordination, through a regular uninterrupted channel from the Apostles. The extraordinary way is that of being specially called and immediately appointed by God himself. And this he never does without having some extraordinary work to accomplish, nor without arming those whom he thus appoints with sufficient power to work miracles, in order to convince those to whom they are sent, that they had in reality received their commission and authority directly from God himself. Moses performed miracles, to convince the Israelites that he was specially sent to deliver them from the hands of the Egyptians. Elijah brought fire from Heaven—Elisha caused iron to swim, and raised the dead, and other Prophets also performed miracles, in proof of their being directly sent by God. And even Christ himself appealed to the works which he did to prove the divinity of his mission: the “works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.”* The Apostles also performed miracles, to demonstrate to the world that they were divinely inspired, commissioned and authorised to preach the Gospel and to establish Christianity amongst men. But when the Christian Religion had become established, and rules were given, by which a succession of Ministers was to

* John, v., 36.

be appointed, to uphold it to the end of time, miracles were no longer necessary, and, therefore, immediately ceased, the power being withdrawn by which alone they were wrought. God himself gave directions, and appointed a way by which his Church was to be supplied with Ministers in all the subsequent ages of the world. And to suppose that he would himself inspire men to act contrary to his own rules, and break his own laws and order, is no better than blasphemy. It may be said that he has a right to deviate from his own laws when, and as he pleases. This I admit. But to imagine that he does so in this case—to suppose that God has himself extraordinarily raised up and called to the Ministry of his Church all the various shades, colours, grades, and sects of Dissenting Teachers, which infest the Church of Christ in these latter days, would in many ways impeach his wisdom. It would imply that the means he at first appointed, for the purpose of ensuring a succession of Ministers to build up his body the Church in her most holy faith, have failed of accomplishing that object, and disappointed him; and that he is, therefore, now obliged to raise up a host of unordained Teachers—to make use of extraordinary means to attain that object, to the accomplishment of which, he finds by experience, his ordinary means prove quite inadequate.

In short, as there are but two ways by which persons can become Ministers of the Church of Christ, so there are but two ways by which they can make it appear that they are true Ministers of Christ. If they were made Ministers in the ordinary way, that is, by being regularly ordained by some one possessing authority from the Apostles in a direct line to ordain, they must make it appear by producing unquestionable evidence of their having been so Ordained. And if they say that they were made Ministers in the extraordinary way, that is, by being specially and directly called and appointed by God himself, they must produce sufficient evidence of their having been so called and appointed,

which can only be done by performing miracles. And every one who pretends to be a Minister of the Gospel, but who can neither produce evidence of his having received Ordination in a direct line from the Apostles, nor perform miracles, is to be rejected as a dangerous impostor,—as one having authority from neither God nor man in any sense. When the Corinthians questioned the Apostleship of St. Paul, he immediately appealed to the *signs* of his Apostleship, “in nothing,” says he, “am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the *SIGNS* of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in *signs* and *wonders*, and *mighty deeds*.”* Persons may say that they are Ministers of the Gospel, but simply *saying* so is not sufficient; if they bear witness of themselves, their witness is not true;† they must produce their authority; if they cannot, it is at our peril that we have any thing to do with them. The soul is of inconceivable value, and the care of it of the greatest importance; and, therefore, a man is not to submit himself to the spiritual guidance of any quack teacher that may please to set himself up for a Minister of Christ.

We have in this kingdom a vast number of Dissenting Denominations of almost every shade of difference; and the Teachers of almost all these various sects, pretend that they are specially called and inspired by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel. Now it is a well known fact, that the faith and preaching and praying of some of these Teachers is as directly contrary to the faith, preaching, and praying of others as can possibly be imagined. I, therefore, ask, can any man possessed of reason, for a moment imagine that the Holy and Blessed Spirit would raise up and inspire one man to preach one thing, and another man to preach another thing quite the contrary? Impossible, Sir, the very thought is derogatory to the attributes of the Most High. And, therefore, as it is utterly impossible that all the various pretenders to

* 2 Cor. xii. 12.

† John v. 31.

inspiration should be right, how are we to know who are right and who are wrong? We are not to suppose that God has so frequently cautioned us against false Prophets and false Teachers, without furnishing us with means by which we may be able to distinguish his true Ministers from the false. From the Bible we discover that no person ever duly exercised the Ministerial Office, without having either received regular Ordination, or being able to work miracles. And the evidence of having received regular Apostolic or Episcopal Ordination or miracles, are the only proofs we now have, that persons are true Ministers of Christ. By these two tests we are to try the pretensions of all who lay claim to the Ministerial Office, and all those who cannot abide the trial, are, of course, false Prophets and false Teachers.

It may be said, that many Dissenting Teachers, who cannot abide a trial by either of these tests, are such eloquent, talented, and excellent Preachers, that they must be inspired or assisted by the Holy Spirit. But such arguing has no force whatever, because some Socinian Teachers are really as eloquent, as talented, and as excellent preachers as those of any other sect; and yet no man will say, that they are either inspired or in the least degree assisted by the Holy Spirit, for they deny his very existence. Good preaching is, therefore, no proof at all of the inspiration of the Preacher, or of his being a true Minister of the Gospel. If we are to believe that all are called and inspired to preach the Gospel who say they are, we must believe that women are; for although the Holy Spirit has absolutely forbidden them to preach,* yet there are many who tell us that the Holy Spirit has inspired them to preach, that is, that the Holy Spirit has actually falsified himself by inspiring them to break his own express commands, which is the very height of blasphemy. Nevertheless, these impudent preaching women are just as much

* See 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.

called and inspired by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel, as any of the Dissenting Teachers in the kingdom, and have just as much right to say they are, and are worthy of equal credit.*

Success is also urged by Dissenters as a sure indication of the inspiration of their Teachers, and of the blessing of God upon their respective "Interests;" but nothing can be more idle or more absurd than *such* reasoning; for it is too true, and, therefore, much to be lamented, that, under the guise of liberalism, both Popery and Socinianism are greatly on the increase. And there are but few, except Papists and Socinians, I imagine, who will admit that the increase of Popery and Socinianism is a proof of the blessing of God upon them, or of the Holy Spirit's assisting them. Success is, therefore, no proof whatever of the goodness of a sect, or of the inspiration of its Teachers.

Heretics and Schismatics of almost every description, that have infested the Church of Christ in all ages, have been great pretenders to inspiration; the same leaven of spiritual wickedness, which is now manifesting itself around us in so many different ways, is nothing

* As I was passing through a market town, a short time ago, I called upon a gentleman, with whom I was acquainted, and on his pressing me to stay with him till the following day, I consented. He immediately said, "Well then, as a woman is going to preach at the Quaker's Meeting-house, at seven o'clock to-night, we will go and hear her." "But," I remarked, "how do you know that she *WILL* speak to-night?" "O," said he, "a Quaker told me so,—besides, there are placards up in the town announcing it." "Yes," said I, "but as the Quakers profess never to speak till the spirit moves them, how does *SHE HERSELF* know whether she will speak at seven o'clock to-night or not? Indeed, how does she know whether the spirit will move her to-night *AT ALL* or not; we may be disappointed if we go?" My friend laughed and said, "but we will run the chance of it." We went; and arriving a little after the time appointed, found *TABITHA* "upon her legs," and being possessed of a "face of brass," and a glib tongue, she gabbled away. But such tautology did she make use of, and such nonsense did she utter, and such quantities of it, that her preachment was truly a satire upon all the *SPIRITS* in existence.

I recollect also, that on one occasion, when a man, who pretended that he had been called by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel, got to the Meeting-house, mounted on the rostrum, and had taken his text, he *COULD NOT UTTER A SINGLE WORD*. It was, therefore, matter of fact, that the spirit had *CALLED HIM TO HOLD HIS TONGUE*, and he manifested his wisdom in obeying it. Really, how inconsistent, and how absurd are the blasphemous pretences of all such lying impostors! and how easily is their spiritual legerdemain exposed!!

new, it has existed ever since the days of the Apostles in some shape or other ; and although there appears to be a great variety of Heresies and Schisms, they still are only different characters assumed by the one and self-same spirit of delusion. The unintelligible gibberish of the Irvingites ; the ideal vagaries of the Swedenborgians ; the visionary dreams of Johanna Southcote, and her goat-like Prophets ; the pretended miraculous conversions, the casting out of devils, and other " signs and lying wonders " of other sects ; and the pretendedly inspired prayers, sermons, &c. &c. of all the different Dissenting tribes, are only so many different ways, and so many various modifications of the manifestation of that " lying spirit " that is gone out into the world. And although every separate sect pretends to be particularly inspired or actuated by the Holy Ghost, who is ever one and the same, and, therefore, cannot contradict himself ; yet does each sect condemn all the others, and congratulates itself with the self-pleasing idea of its not holding any of what it considers their respective errors.

The Dissenters, in general, make great objection to written prayers and sermons ; this objection arises from the idea that extempore Teachers preach and pray according to the impulse of the Holy Spirit, as though the blessed Spirit cannot as well assist a Minister in composing written sermons in his study as in preaching extemporaneous ones in the pulpit. But all such pretensions to inspiration on the part of unauthorized Preachers are certainly of a most blasphemous character, for they thus put what they preach on an equal footing with the pure Word of God. And I have myself heard some of them, in order to blind the people and to keep up the farce, pray that they might be directed by the Holy Spirit to choose a passage of God's Word suitable to the Congregation, when I have known that the text had been chosen and the subject thoroughly studied before the service commenced. Besides, Sir,

I recollect hearing you say, that once, when on a journey to London, you were accompanied by a pretended Prophet of that impostor Johanna Southcote; and that in the course of conversation, he avowed that he had been favoured with a revelation from Heaven, which he then had in his pocket, written upon parchment, and which he was carrying to London to make known to some of his brethren; you said you requested him to shew it you, and that he did so, and that upon examination, you found it to be written in very bad Latin, which induced you to tell him that it very evidently was not a divine revelation, for had it been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it would most certainly have been written in good Latin. This argument I recollect you considered quite conclusive against the inspiration of the pretended Prophet, in which I did then and do now fully agree with you. At the same time, I conceive that the same mode of arguing is equally as conclusive against the pretended inspiration of extemporizing Preachers; for it is a well known fact, that not one out of fifty speaks good English; and it is very evident that if they were inspired by the blessed Spirit, he would most assuredly influence them to use good and proper language—whereas numbers of them do really utter such nonsense, that both they and their preachments are a satire on religion, and have done it more real injury than all the envenomed shafts of Infidelity. And there is little doubt that the increasing disregard of the lower classes to every thing in the shape of religion, and the spread of Infidelity amongst them, may, in a great measure, be ascribed to the loose and hypocritical pretences of “preaching the Gospel,” through which they can easily see.

Indeed all who take upon themselves the Ministerial office, and set themselves up as Preachers of the Gospel, without being regularly and duly authorised by those appointed in the Church of Christ for that

purpose, are no more than intruders, whatever may be their pretensions. All "such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming *themselves* into the Apostles of Christ."* They are not made Ministers by others, according to Christ's appointment, but they make themselves Ministers—they transform *themselves* into the Ministers of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light.

Therefore, it is no great thing if his Ministers also be transformed as the Ministers of Righteousness.† They put on the appearance of great piety, pretend to great sanctity, are very zealous for the cause of religion, and imitate in every respect the true Ministers of Christ. But being destitute of the delegated authority of Christ, they are to be considered merely in the light of a man who takes upon himself the office of a magistrate without a commission—without the delegated authority of the King. Such a man might be of a more excellent understanding—might possess a far more extensive knowledge of the law, and might be far better able to administer it than many duly authorised magistrates; but not having received authority from the King, none of his acts would be legal, or valid, and, therefore, not binding upon any of the King's subjects. So a man may be of a more consistent conduct—may be of a more excellent understanding in spiritual matters—may possess a far more extensive knowledge of the Gospel, and be far better able to preach it, than many duly authorised Ministers; but not having received the delegated authority of Christ in regular Ordination, none of his acts can be legal or valid, and, therefore, not at all binding upon any of Christ's subjects. A desire to do good, and a hope of doing it, would by no means justify him in assuming the Ministerial office; he is not to "*do evil that good may come.*" Whenever God really intends

* 2 Cor. xi. 13.

† 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

an individual for the Ministry of his holy Church, in whatever circumstances or station of life that individual may be placed, he will open up a way in the course of his Providence, whereby he may enter the Ministry by regular Ordination, his own appointed way. This he has frequently done, for several persons who have been ornaments to Christianity and our excellent Church, have been raised, by the Providence of God, from the very lowest grades of society. But, to allow every man to assume the Ministerial office who may think proper to do so, without any kind of order, would create endless confusion, as it does with Dissenters; put an end to the office altogether; destroy the communion of the Saints, together with the visibility of the Church of Christ, and banish Christianity itself from the face of the earth.

In conclusion, Sir, I remark, that I am quite of Ignatius's opinion, that without Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, *there is no Church*; and, therefore, that all the various Sectarian Societies which are without the presence and presidency of a regular successor of the Apostles, are without the pale of the Christian Church; and whatever title they may arrogate to themselves, or whatever they may be called by others, they are neither Christian Churches, nor parts of the visible Church of Christ. For, by rejecting the authority of Christ as it exists in his delegated Ministers—his only official representatives, they are guilty of rejecting Christ, which constitutes one of the principal features, and one of the main offences, of Anti-Christ. Viewing all Dissenters in this Scriptural light, I could no longer conscientiously, and as an honest and consistent man, remain a Member of your Society. I felt obliged, out of duty to God and reverence to his Holy Word, to throw off that pretended authority which you had unscripturally usurped over my conscience. And if you feel at all aggrieved at my not considering you a Minister of Christ, you have nothing to do but to shew

me your authority—to give me something like reasonable evidence of your being a Minister of the Gospel of Christ, and I will immediately consider you as such, but not till then.—In the meanwhile,

I am, Sir,

Your's most obediently,

L. S. E.

LETTER VII.

ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

SIR,

THOSE being pointed out, who are alone to be acknowledged as the true Ministers of Christ, and the only means by which they can be distinguished from false Teachers and mere pretenders being afforded, the next thing to be determined is, what authority belongs to them as the delegated and authorised servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as his representatives in the government of his Church? The Church of Christ, as well as every other Society, must have rules by which to conduct its affairs, for without them it cannot exist. St. Augustine justly says,—“Nulla religio neque vera neque falsa sine cœremoniis potest consistere;”—no religion, whether true or false, can possibly exist without ceremonies. This is a truth acknowledged and experienced not only by the Church, but also by every sect of those “who separate themselves.”* Since this is the case, therefore, and since the New Testament does not furnish the Church with directions sufficiently explicit and minute to guide all its necessary proceedings, the question is, by whom, or by what authority are they to be determined? As Christ has ceased to converse orally with his Church, all those proceedings for which no particular directions

are given in the Word of God, must be determined by his representatives—in his name and by his authority committed to them. Their commission runs thus: “As my Father sent me, even so send I you;”* that is, as my mission is of Divine authority, so is your’s; and, therefore, “He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.”† The authority of Christ’s Ministers is evidently of a two-fold nature, relating to matters of faith and to external rites and ceremonies; and the twentieth Article truly asserts, that “The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith.” These words declare the power and privilege of the Church; but those which immediately follow prescribe its limits—“and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written;” neither “besides the same ought it to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.” Nothing can possibly exceed the shameless dishonesty of Dissenters with regard to this Article: They only quote the first part, namely, “The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith.” And it is by no means difficult to divine the reason—to bring the Church into disrepute, and thus aggrandize their own wicked faction, is the sole object of Dissenting writers. They quote only the words just cited, for the purpose of drawing from them the most monstrous conclusions; in amount that the Church arrogates to herself the most unwarrantable authority, claiming power to decree what rites or ceremonies she pleases, independently of the Word of God, and derogatory to the glory of Christ. Such iniquitous craft is truly worthy of the unscriptural cause in the defence of which it is used, and is scarcely exceeded even by the Jesuits of apostate Rome. The simple quotation of the very next sentence of the Article,

* John xx. 21.

† Luke x. 16.

which is this: "and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written," would render it quite unobjectionable; but then that would defeat the object of such unprincipled writers, and, therefore, it is of course artfully kept back. The Article, taken as a whole, contains not a whit more than what every petty sect of Dissenters unlawfully claims for itself; indeed, if Dissenters would remain contented within the limits of the Article, and ordain nothing "that is contrary to God's Word written," they would give up all the Dissenting notions and unscriptural fancies to which they so tenaciously adhere.

But I will now endeavour to prove from the New Testament, that the Bishops, or chief Pastors of the Church, have authority in matters of faith. The first place to which I refer is the fifteenth chapter of Acts, where we discover that some Judaizing Teachers had disturbed the Christians at Antioch, telling them that except they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. And this being an important matter, "they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the *Apostles and Elders* about this question." "And the *Apostles and Elders* came together for to consider of this matter, and formed what is commonly called "the first general Council," at which they made the first Christian Canon or Decree, in which the Church at Antioch, and the Churches of many other places, were commanded to abstain from meat offered to idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood. I know it is assumed by Dissenters, that as the Brethren are joined with the Apostles and Elders in the salutation of the Churches of Antioch and Syria, and Cilicia, they assisted in making the Decree; but provided no other part of the narrative contradicted the idea, it would by no means follow that because they joined in the salutation, they did so in making the Decree. We know that the

Church at Jerusalem consisted at this time of not less than ten thousand persons, and very probably many more ; and it seems highly unreasonable to suppose that such numbers assembled together on this occasion. But it is only said that “ the *Apostles and Elders* came together for to consider of this matter.” Here is not the slightest intimation that any came together but “ the *Apostles and Elders*.” But even admitting that others did come together with them, it by no means follows that they did so expressly “ *for to consider of this matter*.” Besides, the resolutions are called afterwards “ the Decrees that were ordained of the *Apostles and Elders*”* only. We are, therefore, fully justified in concluding that such was the case—that the Decrees were ordained by the sole authority of the Ministers without the interference of the people. The Decree, indeed, was proposed by St. James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, who in all probability presided, and was immediately agreed to by the Council. Moreover, the letter issued by this Council, contains words evidently implying both the superiority of the Apostles and Elders to other Ministers, and their authority in matters of faith ; for they use as an argument against those of Antioch, who taught circumcision and the observance of the law, that they had given them no such commandment, “ to whom” say they, “ we gave no such commandment.”† The use of this language by the Apostles would have been truly ridiculous, had they not possessed authority to command Ministers in matters of faith. Besides you are so exceedingly unfortunate in the passages of Scripture you produce in support of your idle theories, that they do little else but shew the weakness of your cause, and your want of Scripture proof. For the very narrative in question, from which you so vainly attempt to prove that the affairs of the Church are to be managed by the voice of the people, proves fatal to your notion of Con-

* Acts, xvi. 4.

† Acts, xv. 24.

gregational Independency. For where was the Independency of the Church of Antioch, in submitting to a law made by the Church of Jerusalem? Will you, and your Society, submit to a law made by a Church three hundred miles distant? If even, therefore, the laity of the Church at Jerusalem had a voice in making the Decree, it proves nothing at all to your purpose, but the very reverse of it; for the Church of Jerusalem were not making a law for themselves, but for the Church of Antioch. And besides, what could possibly induce a belief that the laity of the Church of Jerusalem were at all better qualified to decide the question than the laity of the Church of Antioch, especially when we consider, that with the latter were the Apostles Paul and Barnabas? This narrative furnishes a precedent, which goes a great deal further to prove that the Church of England has a right to make laws for Dissenters, than it does to prove the laity have a right to interfere in making Church laws; for where has this the slightest countenance in all the Word of God?

The next passage I produce, to prove that the chief Ministers of God's Church have authority in matters of faith, is this, "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest *charge some that they teach no other doctrine.*"* If this text does not prove to a demonstration, that Timothy possessed authority in matters of faith, it is impossible for human language to do it: nothing can possibly be more to the point, another word is therefore useless. And, as he was empowered and commanded to exercise such authority, (if occasion should require it) over the faith of other Ministers of the Gospel, his *superiority* to them is also placed beyond a doubt. And, as the chief Ministers or Bishops of the Church, such as Timothy and Titus were, have authority over the faith of Ministers, they must in consequence possess authority over the faith of all the Members of the Church. This is

* Tim. i. 3.

also evident from St. Paul's words to Titus, "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition, reject."* It is impossible to read these passages, and numerous others which occur in the New Testament, without being forcibly struck with the great contrast that exists between Primitive Christianity and your Modern Independency; you have completely turned things upside down. All the power and authority which in primitive times belonged, and do now properly belong to the Bishops or chief Ministers of the Church, you give to the people, who instead of ruling, are bound by the Scriptures *to obey* them that have the rule over them, and to *submit themselves*.† That is, they are to obey those who have received authority to govern from the Apostles in regular Ordination; no others have any claim to their obedience, for having received no authority from Christ, they have no power to command; and to obey them is great wickedness, because no one can obey such usurpers without rejecting Christ their lawful King, who is represented by his duly authorised Ministers, whose duty it is to govern all professing Christians within their respective jurisdictions, not in their own name but in Christ's name, and in virtue of his authority delegated to them. And it is the indispensable duty of all professing Christians to obey them, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the office they sustain, as the representatives of Christ.

From the sacred writings we discover that Church authority was never committed to any *body* of men, but always to *single* individuals, as Timothy and Titus, who were each authorised to examine, appoint, and ordain, or reject Ministers; to command them what doctrine to preach, to receive accusations against them, to judge and to rebuke, and with all authority too; to judge of the fitness of candidates for communion; and to reject heretics, and, in short, to be the sole rulers of their respective Churches. But if the Primitive

* Titus, iii. 10.

† Heb. xiii. 17.

Churches had been constituted like your Societies, all these matters would have belonged to the people, and they would have received all those orders and directions respecting them which were given to Timothy and Titus, and would undoubtedly have said to Timothy and Titus in the true spirit of Dissent, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the Congregation of the Lord?"* 'Why assume ye authority over us in commanding, rebuking, and rejecting us at your pleasure? As we are Independent, we shall manage all our concerns ourselves; and we assure you, we will not have you to exercise your authority over us, neither will we submit to your domination.' Such, in amount, would have been, and very justly might have been, the reasoning of the Primitive Churches, had they been constituted like yours, and had any one attempted to exercise that authority over them with which Timothy and Titus, and others, were divinely invested. Did my limits permit, I could produce numerous other passages from the New Testament in proof of Ministerial authority in matters of faith, but those already cited are quite sufficient. In order, however, to show the audacious opposition to the Word of God manifested by Dissenting writers, I will here give a single quotation from one of them:—Mr. Scales, with that utter disregard to truth which characterises almost every page of his book, says, 'Even Apostles themselves never claimed, or presumed to exercise, any dominion over the faith of men.'† Now, to show the falsehood of such a daring assertion, one needs but contrast it with the words of the Apostle—"charge some that they teach no other doctrine." "A man that is a heretic reject."‡ Numerous other passages might be produced from Mr. Scales's book, and also from other Dissenting works,

* See Numbers, 16, *passim*.

† Scales, p. 36.

‡ Titus, iii. 10.

as directly opposed to some of the most express passages of the Holy Scriptures. And yet these very men, who thus so impiously oppose the Scriptures of Truth, are continually bawling—"the Scriptures;—the Scriptures are our only rule of faith and practice." What claim such writers have to be considered as Christians, and Christians of "tender consciences" too, I freely leave others to determine.

I will now proceed to the consideration of the remaining part of the subject,—the authority of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies. That the public worship of God could not be performed without some ceremonies, is self-evident. Every act of worship, and every thing connected with it, must be performed in some way, and after some manner or other. The question then is, does the Scripture point out to us the particular manner in which every thing is to be done? The answer must be, that it does not; therefore, for the purpose of preserving uniformity of worship, and avoiding tumult and confusion, rules and regulations must be appointed and acceded to. These must, of course, be made by those "who have the rule"* in the Church of God. This is clear, from the Apostle's words to Titus: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that *thou* shouldst *set in order the things that are wanting*" or left undone.† As, therefore, Titus had the power of ordering things left undone in Crete, so likewise have those who now hold the same office in the Church which Titus then held, the same power of ordaining things left undetermined by the Word of God, provided that they do not "ordain any thing contrary to God's Word," and that they attend to the Apostle's injunction—"Let all things be done decently and in order."‡ In reference to these words, Calvin justly observes—"Non potest habere, quod Paulus hic exigit ut decenter omni et ordine fiant nisi additis constitutionibus tanquam vinculis quibusdam; ordo ipse

* Heb. xiii. 17.

+ Titus, i. 5.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

et decorum servetur."* In English, that which St. Paul here requires, that all things be done decently and in order, cannot be had except Canons be made, by which, as by certain bands, that very order and decency may be preserved. And Zanchius, another great Protestant Reformer whom you delight to honour, truly says—"Sine ceremoniis nec fideles in unum convenire et coalescere possunt nec Deo publice servire."† That is, that the faithful can never agree nor grow up together into one body, nor God be publicly worshipped, without ceremonies. That God is to be worshipped, the Scriptures with one voice declare; but where, when, and how he is to be worshipped they no where determine. And, therefore, the places where, and the times when, the people of God are to meet—the order in which Divine Service is to be celebrated—the habit in which the Minister is to be clothed—the postures to be used by the people in their public devotions—when kneeling, standing, or sitting may be used with most comeliness and edification—what tables, cups, and plates are to be used at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—what vessels for the water at Baptism, and numerous other such circumstantialia are left to be determined in decency and order by the Church. The Apostles ordained many rites and ceremonies in the Primitive Churches, which are now considered as indifferent, and are no more practised by Dissenters than they are by the Church. Indeed, of many of them we are entirely ignorant; St. Paul made ordinances for the Corinthians, and praised them for keeping them. He exhorts the Thessalonians to "hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or his Epistle."‡ What he taught them by word we of course do not know, and, therefore, cannot observe. He also taught the Corinthians several things, not by Divine inspiration, but simply as an ordinary Minister;—he says, "I speak this by permission, and

* Inst. l. b. iv. c. 10.

† Zanch. de Red. lib. 1. p. 450.

‡ 2 Thes. ii, 15.

not of commandment." "To the rest speak I not the Lord." "Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful."* In these passages he evidently distinguishes between human authority and Divine. He declares, that he commanded and advised many things of his own power as an ordinary Minister of the Church, for which he had no express command from the Lord. Why, then, may not Christ's Ministers make rules now, concerning things indifferent?

I may also add the practice of the Jewish Church, who although they had every ceremony and every particular prescribed them, even to the pins, cords, and hooks of the tabernacle, the fire-pans, tongs, and snuffers of the sanctuary, yet added some ceremonies that were not commanded, and some of them very important ones too. The anointing of their dead, and the order of their burials, were not prescribed by God, and yet our Saviour himself was so far from blaming them that he was contented to be buried after that manner. The rites of their marriage were not commanded by God, yet our Saviour acknowledged their marrying as a *religious* ceremony, and pronounced it as valid as if it had been performed by God himself;—"what God hath joined together let no man put asunder."† And, besides, the Jews, without any command from God, instituted two great festivals to be solemnized every year; the feast of Purim, in commemoration of their deliverance from the conspiracy of the wicked Haman; and the Feast of Dedication, in commemoration of the Purification of the Temple, after it had been polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes. These feasts were celebrated in Christ's time, and he not only did not blame either their institution or observance, but approved of the Feast of Dedication, by honouring it with his gracious presence.‡ If, then, the Jews, who were commanded so

* 2 Cor. vii. 6, 12, 25.

† Matt. xix. 6.

‡ See John, x. 22, 23.

expressly to do every thing according to the pattern shewed in the Mount, had power to decree rites and ceremonies, how much more they who enjoy the glorious liberty of the Gospel, and to whom no such particular directions are given! Indeed, the very fact of no directions being given, absolutely obliges the Church to ordain rites and ceremonies in reference to the worship of God, simply because no worship can be performed, and no Church can exist, without them. And provided these ceremonies be not imposed as parts of God's worship, nor as things necessary in themselves, and be not contrary to any Gospel truths, they are perfectly right, and ought to be used. And such are the ceremonies of the Church of England, they are merely considered as appurtenances of the worship of God, and no more the essence of it than a man's coat is of the essence of a man. They are appointed, and used for the same purpose, as a man uses his clothes—for the sake of decency and comeliness; and what is there in their nature, number, or tendency to which any man, endued with but little of either real religion or reason, can object? What is there in them to call for, much less to justify, all the volumes of scurrilous abuse that have been poured upon them by self-conceited, presumptuous schismatics?

The ceremonies of the Church are few, simple, and expressive. The principal of them are—turning to the east at the repetition of the Apostle's Creed—bowing at the name of Jesus—the use of the surplice—the sign of the Cross in Baptism, and kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Turning to the east, though a very ancient, is quite an indifferent ceremony; and persons might attend Church all their lives without being ever blamed for the non-observance of it. Your objection to this ceremony, therefore, vanishes at the touch. Humbly bowing when we confess our belief in Jesus Christ, is simply done out of reverence and adoration to Him as our adorable Redeemer, and in accordance to the Scriptures, which declare—"that at

the name of Jesus every knee shall bow."* You call it superstition—I hope the Church will ever give you an opportunity of doing so, and that she will ever glory in such superstition. Any objection to this ceremony would come with far better grace from Socinians, or professed Infidels. The use of the surplice is merely for the sake of decency, and has the effect of preventing Ministers from dressing in any fanciful way; and there is certainly quite as much reason for the use of a white surplice as for a black gown, and very probably much more Scripture.

With respect to the use of the sign of the cross in Baptism, a Dissenting writer says—"The use of the sign is enjoined both in the Liturgy and Canons of your Church, so that it is made to constitute an essential part of the ordinance of Baptism." This worthy writer is either grossly ignorant of the Liturgy and Canons of the Church, or otherwise wilfully determined to calumniate them; which ever it be is equally culpable, for I flatly deny that the Church anywhere teaches that the sign of the cross is "an essential part," or any part at all, of the ordinance of Baptism. She says, in her thirteenth Canon expressly, "that the sign of the cross used in Baptism is *no part* of the substance of that Sacrament; for when the Minister dipping the infant in water, or laying water upon the face of it, hath pronounced these words: 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' the infant is fully and perfectly baptized. So as the sign of the cross being afterwards used, does neither add anything to the virtue and perfection of Baptism, nor being omitted, doth detract anything from the effect and substance of it." And I may add, that when a child is baptized privately, it is not signed with the sign of the cross, and yet its baptism is considered quite as valid as though it had been baptized publicly, and signed with the sign of the

cross. What, therefore, are we to think of men—men of tender consciences too—who violate every principle of truth and honesty, and assert with the *creditable* Dissenter I have quoted above, that the Church makes the sign of the cross “an *essential part* of Baptism?” Can we wonder that “the Dissenting Interest” is in such a desperate state, when such unholy means are made use of to support it? Can we believe for a moment that the blessing of God will descend upon a cause supported by such wicked—such barefaced falsehoods? If, indeed, Dissenters would give up their iniquitous practice of misrepresenting things, and forging falsehoods respecting the Church, they would have nothing at all to Dissent about or write against. But by such practices Dissent is supported. Dissenters themselves openly confess, that hatred and abuse of the Church are indispensable to uphold Dissent. Hear, *again*, what is said by the Eclectic Review, the leading organ of Dissent—“*pure* attachment to Dissenting principles *requires* to be kept up in minds of a certain class by a KEEN HATRED, and now and then a little ROUND ABUSE OF THE CHURCH.” This is plain language, and needs no comment. For if it does not show up the principles of Dissent, it sufficiently discovers the principles of Dissenters.

Kneeling at the Sacrament is also a ceremony to which you object, but of which I highly approve, as a far more humble, becoming, and reverend posture in which to receive the memorials of the death of the Saviour than your sitting; and quite as Scriptural. You contend that sitting was the posture used by Christ and his Apostles at the institution of this Sacrament; but you must be aware that their mode of sitting was very different from yours—they lay or reclined on couches, and leaned or lay upon, or, perhaps better, *near* each other, as is evident from St. John’s “lying upon Jesus’ breast”* at the Last Supper. If, therefore, you

* John, xiii. 25.

will follow the example of Christ and his Apostles, you must immediately furnish your Meeting-houses with couches, and recline upon them at the Lord's Supper,—which, at the present day, would really be a very pretty sight. You tell your people that sitting was the posture used by Christ and his Apostles; but you take very good care *not* to tell them that their manner of sitting was very different from yours. Your sitting, therefore, is no more Scriptural than our kneeling; it is, in fact, rank Popery; for the Pope always arrogantly sits at the reception of the Lord's Supper.

Besides, to be guided by the example of Christ and his Apostles as you pretend, you ought to receive it in an upper room, directly after a common supper and late at night; you ought to use unleavened bread made of the same kind of wheat; you ought to have no women with you, for there were none with Christ and his Apostles; you ought to administer the Sacrament to the Communicants yourself as Christ did, instead of that your Deacons administer it to all the Communicants, and also to themselves, and you administer it to yourself only. These, and many other of your practices connected with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, are quite *unscriptural*, and rest upon nothing but *human* authority;—a few of them you even borrow from the Church herself. Moreover, you ought to use the same sort of bread and the same sort of wine which Christ used, and bless them in the same words; but it is not said what sort of wine Christ used, nor in what words he blessed the elements, which would have been mentioned had it been of any consequence; and yet the essence of the elements is certainly of far greater importance than the posture in which they are received. But, Sir, your opposition to the Church is of that malicious nature, that had she ordained sitting at the Sacrament instead of kneeling, you would have condemned it as most irreverent, and as proceeding from nothing but a want of devotion; piety, and religion, or from idleness, and would your-

selves have practised kneeling, and extolled it as by far the more becoming, devotional, reverent—aye, and *Scriptural* posture too. And, in short, if every ceremony were laid aside, and every objection which you now make to the Church were removed to-day, to-morrow you would raise up objections equally as potent; for nothing would ever satisfy your Dissenting propensities but placing your whole fraternity of Teachers into the Church livings—never a murmur would then be heard. Your “tender consciences” would then be quiet enough; we should never hear another word against tithes, Church Establishments, or any thing else; every thing would then be quite Scriptural—the Word of God would *then*, also, be your only rule of faith and practice.

That agreement in the fundamental matters of faith, and in external rites and ceremonies is absolutely necessary to the existence of any Society whatever, is acknowledged not only by the Church, but by every schismatical sect in the kingdom. And surely the Church has at least as much right to prescribe her own terms of Communion—to set forth her own interpretation of Scripture, and to command compliance with her own rites and ceremonies, as any petty sect of Dissenters. Although, however, you deny this right to the Church, you peremptorily claim it for yourselves; you will not admit a man into Membership with you, except he professes to believe what you consider to be the truth of the Gospel, and intend to comply with your rites and ceremonies. You will not allow *him* to be the judge, as to whether his own views are Scriptural or not, *you* will be the judge or judges of that. Some Independent Societies have written Articles of Faith, to which they demand the assent and subscription of every Member on admission. I know you have not, but you might as well have; for you question those desirous of becoming Members as to their faith, and except their sentiments accord with your own you will not admit them. You may talk about the Bible being your only standard of faith and practice, to the

exclusion of all Articles of Belief, and such hypocritical cant may suit your purposes of opposition to the Church well enough; but you will not admit a single individual into your Society, upon his simply declaring that he believes the Bible. You well know that Arians, Socinians, Swedenborgians, Southcotians, Quakers, Jumpers, Shakers, and all the various Schismatics and Heretics of every description in Christendom, would unhesitatingly make such a declaration; you are, therefore, obliged to act in direct opposition to all your high-sounding, empty professions, and interpose Articles of Faith, either written or extemporary. And before you admit a Teacher to a participation of the inexpressible benefits of your mock Ordination, you demand a Confession of Faith from him; but with what consistency, with your boasted principles of Independency, I know not. For it evidently implies, that should his faith not be agreeable to yours, you have the power of rejecting him: if not, to demand his creed, would be perfectly ridiculous; and, indeed, it is ridiculous be it as it may, for according to your own principles, he has just as much right to demand a Confession of Faith from those who are about to perform the farce of Ordaining him, as they have from him.

A great evil, also, connected with your having no standard written Articles of Faith, is, that you have no safeguard against error, as experience has amply proved: for above three parts out of four of the Old Dissenting Meeting-houses are now used for the propagation of Socinianism. Mr. James laments that "*such numbers* of once Orthodox places have fallen into the possession of those who oppose the truth, as it is in Jesus. The many Pulpits now devoted to the propagation of Unitarian Doctrine" were "once the fountains of purer principle."* He,

* James, 217. In the Manchester controversy, the Socinians tell the Independents that they (i. e. the Socinians) are only perfecting what the Independents have begun. And there is certainly much truth in this. Independency retrogrades through Socinianism into its natural and final element—Infidelity. And are not, (I would ask) the ungodly—the Radicals—and the Infidels who infest our parishes, and corrupt our popula-

also, heavily complains of the prevalence and spread of the destructive principles of Antinomianism among your Societies, and not without reason. But, all this would have been effectually prevented by binding the Ministers to the use of sound Articles of Faith, and a Scriptural Liturgy; it is, however, nonsense to talk of binding Independents, for who is to bind them? These evils, therefore, with a host of others under which you labour, are irremediable, because they are the natural results of your unscriptural and pernicious principles of Independency, which would be far more properly termed the principles of anarchy, confusion, and of every evil work. The Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England, taken in connection with her rational and Scriptural form of Government, have always proved, comparatively speaking, effectual barriers against error. There may have been solitary instances of individuals holding heterodox sentiments having entered her Ministry, but their number has always been exceedingly small, and always will be; for no such persons can once read her excellent Liturgy without repeatedly condemning themselves out of their own mouths. And those whose consciences can stand that, would break through any barriers. We may also recollect that there was a Judas, even amongst the Apostles of Christ.

But after all, that very authority of the Church, with which you find so much fault, you would be exceedingly glad to possess: you see it productive of regularity and good order, whilst you are torn to pieces by disorders, quarrellings, divisions, and all kinds of evil. These are, as you know and feel, purely the results of your unholy system—"a system that," as a Dissenter confesses, "*is at variance with human prudence.*"*

tion,—persons who have either been Dissenters themselves, or who are the immediate descendants of Dissenters? And is it not to the levelling religious principles of Dissent, that the insubordination which pervades the lower classes, whether in the factory—in the field, or in the family as domestics, may be justly ascribed?

* Remarks, &c. p. 10.

You are forced to acknowledge, as I have before shewn, that disorder is becoming triumphant over you, and that you are fast sinking under irremediable evils. You have discovered, after the experience of two centuries, "that the system does not work well"—that it has placed you "in a position the most undesirable to a well ordered mind,"—that "the state of Dissenting Congregations throughout the country generally, is such as to present a discouraging aspect"—that, notwithstanding the faults you find with the Church, "the respectable part of the community will sooner submit to them than to *mob-government*"—that "it is a common feeling amongst persons of education, that any government is better than that of a *mob*"—that "*the genius of Independency is hostile to those connecting links which are essential to the preservation of order and good Government;*" and, that "if Non-conformity is ever to flourish again in this country, it must assume other features than it now possesses."* Those features you are desirous of giving it. You wish to abandon your whole system of Independency, and to establish a system congenial with "the preservation of order and good Government." Yes, you are anxious to abandon that very system which you have hitherto lauded as the most reasonable, and the most Scriptural in existence—the very apex of perfection;—but which you now find to be "at variance with human prudence," and working its own destruction, merely because you are destitute of that authority in matters of Faith, and of that power to decree rites and ceremonies, without which your "Interest," any more than any other Religious Society, cannot possibly hold together. When there is no King in Israel, every man may and will do that which is right in his own eyes.

It must be evident to any one, it begins indeed to be so to you, that society cannot exist without some form of Government. The Supreme Power must reside

* Remarks, &c. p. 9, 12.

somewhere, and where but in the supreme part of the body, the heads and guides of the body, as it does in the Church of England? But whatever form of Government you assume, your authority will ever be essentially different from that possessed by the Church. The authority of the Church has been conveyed to her by uninterrupted Ordination, and has Christ for its fountain; whereas yours can never be more than assumed or usurped authority. By your own Ordinations, you acknowledge that Ordination is necessary, that by it, authority to execute the office of the Ministry is conveyed; but by your Ordinations, of course, no authority can be communicated, because none has been received by the Ordainer; and those whom you now ordain, have just as much right to take upon themselves the office of the Ministry without Ordination, as he or they had with whom your line of Ordination commenced. The importance and validity of Ordination consists in its having been received from Christ in an uninterrupted line of succession. This is the way, and the only way, which Christ has been pleased to appoint for the transmission of spiritual authority from one generation to another. Those, therefore, who "have the rule" in the Church of England, having received the authority in this way, are fully authorised to command obedience in spiritual matters, from all professing Christians within their reach or jurisdictions. And all professing Christians are bound by their profession to obey them, considering that obedience is due to them, not on account of their persons, characters, fortunes, names, or stations in the country; nor on account of their being rulers in the Church by the laws of the country; but simply and solely on account of their office, as the Ministers, representatives, or servants of Christ. "*Obey them that have the rule,*" (that is, those who have in regular Ordination received authority from Christ to rule) "*over you, and submit yourselves,*" is the express and inflexible command of God to every professing Christian. And so long as

they do not command any thing to be believed or done which is forbidden by the laws of God, we are bound to obey them. At the same time, as they are not the servants of men, they are not amenable to man's judgment: they are the servants of Christ, and to him only they are amenable. St. Paul says, "Let a man so account of us as the Ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But *with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment—he that judgeth me is the Lord.* Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come."* Should they, therefore, do any thing which we humbly think is not right, we, as private Christians are not to judge them, but to leave them till the Lord, whose servants they are, calls them to give an account of their stewardship. No private Christian can take upon him to find fault with God's Ministers without great arrogance, presumption, and spiritual pride. It ought to be concluded, that as they have more learning—have had more experience, and have the presence of Christ with them, according to the promise he made them, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," they are far better capable of judging with respect to Spiritual things than private Christians. The Church, or in other words, the Governors of the Church, have no power to make laws which shall contradict or supersede the laws of Christ—they neither claim nor exercise such power, but utterly repudiate it in their twentieth article; "It is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a *Witness and a keeper* of Holy Writ, yet as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same, ought it not to

* 1 Cor. iv. 1—5.

enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation." The power which properly belongs to the rulers of the Church, and which they justly claim, is that of administering and executing the laws of Christ laid down in his Word, and of making such minor regulations as they may judge necessary to times and circumstances, for the right administration and execution of those laws; of the interpretation and administration of which they are, of course, the proper and only judges; if not, their authority is a mere non-entity, and those numerous passages of Scripture commanding them to exercise it, and others to obey it, are worse than nothing, inasmuch as they are productive of discord, quarrelling, and mischief. Trusting that you will give this subject that attention and consideration which it imperatively demands,

I remain, Sir,

Your's very faithfully,

L. S. E.

LETTER VIII.

ON THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

SIR,

IN reference to what was advanced in my last letter, you will, I presume, be disposed to enquire, how the power and authority of the Church can be made to square with private judgment? I reply, that with *that* I have nothing at all to do, for one very substantial reason, because the Word of God, which you pretend is your only rule of faith and practice, says just nothing at all on the subject. Your dispute is not with the Church, but with the Lord Jesus Christ, for not having said, in his Word, any thing about a difficulty in reconciling the private judgment of the believers with the judgment of the authorities which he has appointed. One thing is certain, which is, that a *correct* private judgment, though at perfect liberty, will as surely agree with the Church, as it would in the exercise of the same perfect liberty, agree with the conclusions of Euclid.

The rules given by St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, for the government of the Church, are absolute; they have no exceptions in favour of private judgment, it would have been ridiculous had such been the case. Timothy and Titus could not, under such circumstances, have enforced a single command given them. Had they commanded "some that they teach no other

doctrine"* than that which they judged to be the true, the right of private judgment would have been pleaded. Had they, after receiving accusations against any one, proceeded to pass sentence against him, private judgment would have been the plea. Had they rebuked any one, the right of private judgment would have been urged. Had they proceeded to reject a man whom they judged a Heretic, the right of private judgment would have again interfered. In short, whatever they might have commanded or objected to, the plea of private judgment would always have overruled it. The Apostolic Epistles would have been useless, and the exercise of Ministerial Authority altogether a mere farce. Pleading for the undue exercise of the right of private judgment, seems to me synonymous with pleading for unbounded licentiousness, for actions are but thoughts brought forth. If a man think—if it be according to his private judgment that he shall do God service by killing another, he will soon put his thoughts into action; and according to your fancied right of private judgment, why has he not a right to do so? That blaspheming, independent Oliver Cromwell, in whom you so much glory, went into Scotland, and destroyed thousands of the poor loyal Scotch, and had the infernal impudence to call it "the work of the Gospel." And no doubt, in his "private judgment," he thought he was doing God service; as it is written, "the time cometh that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service."†

One thing is very clear, Sir, that Ministerial authority must be exercised, and the Commands which God has given to his Ministers must be enforced by them, let what will become of the right of private judgment. It remains for you to reconcile your pretended right of private judgment with the exercise of that Scriptural authority vested by God in the Church. It remains for you to draw the line of demarcation be-

* 1 Tim. i. 3.

† John xvi. 2.

tween them, Scripturally saying to the advocates of each, "thus far saith the Word of God you shall come, and no further." It remains for you to describe the extent, and define the limits of the right of private judgment, supporting all your arguments from the Word of God, taking care so to "expound one place of Scripture that it be not repugnant to another." It appears to me, that when persons take upon them the profession of Christianity, they at once give up their right of private judgment, and all their real or fancied natural rights of every description whatever. All their individual tastes, inclinations, whims, and fancies,—all those arbitrary and selfish dispositions, disobedient, ambitious, and rebellious tempers, which prevent them from acknowledging "subjection to one another in the fear of the Lord," are all to be renounced. They, thenceforward, obey them that have the rule over them, and submit themselves in humble obedience to the commands of Christ, and for his sake, and exercise themselves in "casting down imaginations or reasonings, (λογισμους) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* The exercise of private judgment appears from this passage to be very narrowly limited, for not only every action, but every *thought* is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And every true and humble Christian, for the sake of union and the peace of God's Church, will "submit himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;" and should there be some things ordained by the Rulers of the Church, not forbidden by the Scripture, about which he may sincerely entertain some few scruples, yet he ought to submit to the practice of them, rather than to produce schisms and discord in the Church of Christ. He had better be a little uneasy himself, than to disobey those who have the rule over him, and disturb the peace and harmony of the

whole Church. Although the Church may not, in his estimation, be infallible ; yet he cannot think without the greatest presumption, but that she is far more likely to be right than himself. He cannot accuse the Church of error, without setting up his own private judgment, above the judgment of the Church, and assuming that superiority over the Church, which he blames the Church for assuming over him : thus, considering himself, or his own private judgment, as possessing that very infallibility which he denies to the Church ; or, (if I may so speak,) considering himself more infallible than the Church. But how contrary this to the precepts of the Apostle, “ Let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory ; but in lowliness of mind let *each esteem other* better than themselves.”*

In order to invalidate the authority of the rulers of the Church, you allege the words of Christ to his Apostles, when they were striving about superiority over each other, “ Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister : and whosoever shall be chief among you, let him be your servant.”† I am sure, Sir, you well know that these words are nothing at all to your purpose. Had they been generally addressed to a mixed multitude of Ministers and hearers, they would have been decidedly in your favour. But such was not the case ; they were addressed exclusively to the Twelve Apostles, who had been striving amongst themselves which should be the greatest ; and Christ in order to prevent such strife, gave them to understand, that amongst THEM there was no superiority but entire equality. And this is as firmly believed by Churchmen as it is by Dissenters. These words prove nothing at all, either for, or against Churchmen or Dissenters ; they have nothing to do with the controversy between

* Phil. ii. 3.

† Matt. xxii. 25, 26, 27.

them. They simply prove, that amongst the chief Pastors or Bishops of the Church, there is perfect equality, and may, therefore, be effectually urged against the usurpation of the Bishop of Rome; but are no more opposed to the authority of the chief Pastors of the Church over inferior Ministers and private Christians, than the first verse of St. Matthew's Gospel. I should fancy that the Apostles to whom the words were spoken, understood them quite as well as you or any Dissenting Teacher in the Kingdom; their practice, therefore, affords a sufficient comment upon them. They themselves exercised authority both over inferior Ministers and private Christians, which they certainly would never have done had it been contrary to these words of Christ. A learned Dissenting Commentator very justly says, upon the 26th verse, "This is not to be extended to Christian Churches, as if there was no Ecclesiastical Authority to be used, or any Church Government and power to be exercised; none to rule, whom others are to obey and submit themselves to; but is to be restrained to the *Apostles as such*, among whom there was an entire equality, being all Apostles of Christ, being equally qualified and sent, and put into the self-same office by him."*

Tenderness or weakness of conscience is also an excuse which you make for objecting to the rites and ceremonies of the Church. You say that the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice, and that, therefore, your consciences will not allow you to believe any doctrine or comply with any ceremony that is not expressly commanded in the Scriptures. This is all very plausible, and will do very well in theory, though in practice you entirely depart from it, and are absolutely obliged so to do; because, as has been before observed, the Word of God has not appointed every thing necessary to the performance of Divine Worship, but has left several matters to be determined by the rulers

* See Gill in loco.

of the Church, as circumstances may require. It is not possible for any sect of professing Christians on earth to make more noise about the Scriptures being their only rule of faith and practice than you do. Every book and every pamphlet you write in opposition to the Church abounds with assertions of this sort, in almost every variety of expression, and with the basest insinuations against the Church. Those who have no knowledge of the Church, but what they have derived from your scurrilous publications, would imagine it to be the most unscriptural, despotic, and iniquitous system in existence; and your "Dissenting Interest" the most Scriptural, disinterested, and holy system on this side Heaven. But those who understand their Bibles, and know any thing of Dissenting principles, opinions, and practices, are well aware that all your noisy pretences about the Scriptures being your only rule of faith and practice, are mere cant and hypocrisy; and made use of for the sole purpose of filling your Meeting-houses, in order to fill your pockets. All can agree that the Bible is the standard of a Christian's faith and practice; but nobody can agree as to what is the right faith, and what is the right practice. They are in the Bible, that is confessed, but nobody can tell where; some point to one part and some to another, and some to the same place in proof of opposite doctrines; to suppose that they are all right, whatever tenderness of conscience they may plead, would be monstrous.

With regard to the liberty of conscience, notwithstanding all your insinuations to the contrary, the Church allows it in its proper extent to every man. But she has, in virtue of her own liberty, an undoubted right to exclude from her Communion, and consider as Schismatics and Heretics all those who in the exercise of the liberty of their conscience deny her faith and act contrary to her practice; or in other words, all those who do not agree with her in what she has full liberty of conscience to consider the truths of the Bible,

or of the Christian Church. St. Paul commanded Titus to reject those whom he might consider Heretics, without any regard to their consciences; he does not tell him to except those who conscientiously embraced Heretical opinions. Titus had nothing to do with their consciences, neither has the Church. If a man holds a doctrine which the Church believes to be false, it is not for her to consider whether he holds it conscientiously or not; the simple fact of his holding it, warrants her in excommunicating him, and in considering and treating him as "a Heathen man, and a Publican."* It is all nonsense to talk about conscience, and conscience, as no man can see the heart of another; it is always or generally taken for granted, that what a man believes he believes conscientiously. When a man begins to tell me about his conscience, and to say how conscientious he is, I immediately suspect him of having some sinister end in view; if he has not, such assertions are quite unnecessary—for if he be honest, let his actions testify it, and not his tongue. A man's being conscientious in the commission of a crime, by no means justifies him. St. Paul persecuted the Christians "unto death," and did it "in all good conscience;"† but after his heart had been "sprinkled from an evil conscience"‡—after his conscience had been rectified by the converting Grace of God, he severely condemns himself for it. You may be quite conscientious in believing all the errors of your system of Congregational Independency, as I once was, but those errors are not thereby rendered a whit the more true. Conscience is not always a safe guide, but very frequently the reverse. The conscience of many a man has led him to Hell; and every man's conscience would do so, were it not purified and set right by the Holy Spirit. The judgment of the duly authorised Ministers of the Church is a far safer guide than a man's own conscience; for in addition to that con-

* Matt. xviii. 17.

* Acts xxiii. 1.

† Heb. x. 22.

scientiousness which they possess in common with private Christians, they have, in virtue of their office, Christ always present with them, assisting and guiding them in their deliberations and determinations, according to his own most gracious promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"*—which promise he will not—he cannot break.

Should a Member of the Church deny her doctrines, and refuse to conform to her practices, whether conscientiously or not, the Church will not in the least infringe his liberty of conscience by casting him without her pale, and considering him no longer as a Christian, but "as a Heathen man and a Publican." Indeed, the Church would by so doing be so far from abridging his liberty of conscience, that she would actually be extending it, by releasing him from that restraint which he could not but feel while he continued nominally a Member of that Church, to which his conscience would tell him he did not really belong. Excommunication, or casting without the pale of Christianity, or the visible Church, is the extent of the Church's jurisdiction; for should the person excommunicated in any way disturb the peace of the Church, or carry out his Heresy into open rebellion, he then falls under the hand of the Civil Power. The Church will of course, as she has an undoubted right to do, withhold from him the enjoyment of whatever immunities or privileges she possesses.

Your friend, Mr. Scales, says, "as an essential principle (of Dissent) we hold and assert the liberty of human conscience from all external and legislative restraints."† I suppose he says *human* conscience, because the conscience of Spirits, if we can thus speak of them, *are* under external and legislative restraints. But what external or legislative restraints can possibly be laid upon a man's conscience, I confess I am at a loss to imagine. I really cannot guess how any legis-

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

† Scales p. 4.

lative enactment can be made to reach a man's thoughts. I do not know that it was ever attempted. The fact is, every man on earth enjoys full liberty of conscience, or liberty of thinking as he pleases; no law ever was made, or ever can be made, to fetter conscience or thought. But when thoughts are brought forth into action, the actions which they produce are of course cognizable by law. And, what you mean by liberty of conscience, is neither more nor less than liberty of acting just as you please; or, in other words, unbounded licentiousness; but this you are not honest enough to avow, and, therefore, conceal it under the plausible pretence of liberty of conscience. And although you resort to the most shameful expedients to have the contrary believed, to serve your unholy cause, you know that the Church of England neither infringes, nor wishes to infringe, your liberty of thinking and acting for yourselves in religious matters; but as your whole system of Congregational Dissent is unscriptural, and contrary to the Word of God, she has a right to deny if she pleases, that you are within the pale of the Christian Church, and that you have any claim to be considered as Christians. But if you persist as you do in affirming that you are Christians, the Ministers of the Church, in the name and authority of Christ, whose representatives they are, demand your obedience; and if you *still* "neglect to hear the Church," they *still* are justified in considering each one of you "as a Heathen man and a Publican."* Were you the pious and conscientious Christians you pretend to be, you would submit to the prescriptions and directions of the Word of God;—you would renounce your unscriptural notion of Congregational Independency, and its consequent errors, and unite yourselves to our true and Apostolic Church; and thus avoid the great sin of Schism, of which you are now inexcusably guilty.

That your plea of weakness and tenderness of conscience when objecting to the few and simple ceremonies of the Church, is altogether mere empty pretence, is sufficiently evident from the circumstance, that your own ceremonies are no more commanded or mentioned in Scripture than those of the Church. For from what passage of Scripture do you prove Congregational Independency? Where is the election of Ministers by the people commanded, or even mentioned, in the Word of God? Where is the observance of the Lord's Day commanded? Where is infant baptism commanded? What passage authorises women to receive the Lord's Supper? What Scripture authorises your Ministers to wear gowns, or to assume the title of Reverend? What Scripture have you for the ceremonies of opening Meeting-houses, or Anniversaries? What Scripture for Committee-men, Trustees, or even Meeting-houses? What for Colleges, Tutors, &c.? What for the admission of Members by letter, or by proxy, &c.?—These, and numerous other practices which I could mention, are no where commanded in the Word of God; and yet you follow them without any scruples of conscience. And, besides your practising many things not enjoined in the New Testament, you omit to practice many which are there mentioned, and which the Apostles themselves practised. And yet you are continually affirming that the Scriptures are your only rule of faith and practice;—that all your religious proceedings are founded upon the Word of God;—and that your consciences are so tender, that they will not allow you to believe or do any thing but what is there expressed. In this way do you, “by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple;”* and daub “them with untempered mortar, saying vanity and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord, when the Lord hath not spoken.”† Pride and self-conceit, Sir, are the founda-

* Rom. xvi. 13.

† Ezekiel, xxii. 28.

tion of all your pretences to tenderness of conscience, liberty of conscience, and deference for the Word of God; humility and modesty are out of the question. For, so far from considering yourselves people of little understandings, or weak consciences, you have consciences strong enough to fancy that you are capable of teaching all the Bishops, Clergy, and Christians in the kingdom. And let a man, when you are canting about your tenderness of conscience, only begin right seriously to pity you, and you will soon let him see what sort of consciences you have,—you will immediately treat him with scorn to his face; and thus convince him, that such a mode of acting will ever prove an immediate and most effectual cure for all pretend- edly weak and tender consciences.

You manifest yourselves, by your conduct, to be the true successors of these in Christ's day, who "strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel."* You strain at a few simple and harmless ceremonies, and swallow the great and heinous sin of schism, which you commit by your Dissension. You destroy the peace and unity of Christ's Church, and actually prevent her from exercising that authority with which Christ has invested her. For, should one of her Members commit a crime, and she take cognizance of it, how can she put into execution this command of Christ?—"If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen man and a Publican;" in other words, let him be excommunicated, or excluded from the Church. Our account of Dissenterism, a compliance with this command of our Lord is utterly impracticable. Excommunicate an obstinate criminal from communion with the Church, he immediately turns Dissenter, laughs at the excommunication of the Church, and considers it a mere impotent threat. And so far are you from rejecting such a person, that you would not only willingly, but most eagerly, receive him amongst you,

and consider him almost in the light of a martyr. But this is not the only evil arising from your schismatical conduct. It furnishes scoffers and infidels with very powerful objections to Christianity, and throws almost immovable stumbling-blocks in the way of sincere enquirers after truth. Whilst these, unable to recognise the language of Canaan amidst the confusion of tongues, feel themselves quite bewildered and lost,—those not at all able, and just as willing, to discriminate the truth from the numerous errors around them, reject Christianity altogether as a cunningly devised fable. Had the Church, indeed, twice as many evils as she appears to your jaundiced eyes to have, you would not be justified in separating from her. No person ought to hazard the commission of the sin of schism, and separate from a Church whose Ministers, like those of our own Church, are the delegated servants of Christ, until, like the idolatrous Church of Rome, she denies the fundamental truths of Christianity, and becomes so corrupt as to render the eternal salvation of her Members dangerously hazardous. Now you do believe, and indeed you dare not deny, that our Church holds the fundamental truths of Christianity, and that numbers of the Ministers and Laity are truly pious and good Christians, and will land safe in heaven at last. Why, then, cannot you go to heaven in the same way? According to your own admission, your salvation would not be endangered; and there are thousands in communion with the Church, who value their immortal souls quite as highly as you do yours, and who are quite as desirous of observing all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord. You must labour extremely hard to make it appear, that your conformity would be half as sinful in the sight of God as your schism. Christ prayed for the *unity* of the Church—that all his Disciples might be *one*. But this you endeavour as much as you can to counteract, and to render his prayer of no avail:

You will not attempt to say, that the Church of England is as corrupt as the Jewish Church was; yet corrupt as was the Jewish Church, our Lord himself conformed to it, and made his Disciples do so too, and they continued to do so, until God, by signs and wonders, and not by the instrumentality of the Christians, publicly changed the Jewish Dispensation, broke up their Civil and Ecclesiastical Polity, and destroyed their Temple and City. As a proof that our Saviour was no Dissenter from the Established Church of his country, he said, but a few hours before his crucifixion, "I sat daily with you teaching in the *Temple*."* And, as a proof that his Disciples were not, we read that even after his ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, "they continued daily, with *one* accord, in the *Temple*."†

Christ, moreover, commanded his Disciples to obey the legitimate successors of Moses—those who had been regularly ordained to their office, "Saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do."‡ Although their conduct was bad; yet, in virtue of the office they had received by regular ordination, Christ expressly commanded even those who believed in him to obey him: so far was he from wishing them to separate from these duly authorised Teachers. And by parity of reasoning, all those who now profess to believe in Christ, are bound to obey his legitimate successors—those who have been regularly ordained to their office in an unbroken line of succession from him; or, in other words, those who now sit in Christ's seat, howsoever ill it may accord with their fancied liberty of conscience. Dissenters, of course, will not obey such Ministers, whether they are according to the will of God or not; for some Dissenters boldly avow that they are under no obligation to obey any of the commands of God, because it

* Matt. xxvi. 55.

† Acts, ii. 46.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

would infringe their liberty of conscience, and be inconsistent with the principles of Dissent. Your friend, Mr. Scales, in the spirit of true Independency, says, and I beg you to observe it, "THE GREAT GOD HIMSELF DOES NOT FORCE OUR FAITH AND OBEDIENCE, OR DENY US THE LIBERTY OF CHOOSING FOR OURSELVES."* This is speaking out in plain terms, there is no ambiguity. If "*the great God himself does not force our faith and obedience*" we certainly cannot be under a positive obligation to believe in him, or obey him. This, surely, will be liberty of conscience sufficient to satisfy any Dissenter, how squeamishly tender soever his conscience may be. But, Sir, I speak deliberately when I say, that I do not recollect having ever read a more damnable, soul-destroying position. I have read Tom Paine's Age of Reason, and I question whether that absurd and impious book contains any thing more blasphemously wicked. To such dreadfully awful lengths does God permit people to go when they leave his Holy Word, and forsake his Holy Church, which he declares to be "the pillar and ground of the truth,"† and attempt to establish "principles" independently of either. Heresy and Schism, if not twin-brothers, are very nearly related, and seldom far apart. This has been abundantly verified, not only in the case of your friend Mr. Scales, but also in numbers of your Congregations, which are now avowedly Socinian. But Heresy and Schism are nothing in your estimation, compared with the rites and ceremonies of the Church. These, few and simple though they be, constantly excite the noise and clamour of your noisy and turbulent faction, and so, indeed, I hope they ever will; for the revilings of a faction will always be more honourable to our excellent Church than its praises. "A man," says Bishop Grove, "that were unacquainted with the true state of our case, that should stand by, and only hear the bitter cries and invectives that have been made against cere-

* Scales, p. 39.

† 1 Tim. iii. 15.

monies, would be ready to imagine that sure our Church was nothing else almost but ceremonies. But he would be mightily surprised, when, upon enquiry, he should find that these ceremonies, which had occasioned all this noise, should be no more than *three*, the surplice, the cross after baptism, and kneeling at the Sacrament. He would be amazed to think, that these should be the things about which so many massy books had been written, so great discords and animosities raised, such a flourishing Church once quite destroyed, and now most miserably divided, after it had been so happily restored; and his wonder must be increased, when he should perceive, that of these three there was but one, and no more, in which the people were in any way concerned. The cross and surplice are to be used only by the Minister, and if his conscience be satisfied, no man's else need be disturbed about them." But to sit as judges, and captiously to find fault with things which in no way concern them, is far more characteristic of Dissenters than to act with that lowliness of mind and humility which become Christians. They sift, and search, and condemn every person, and every thing, just at their pleasure—this is too much—that is too little. This is too long—that is too short. This is Popish—that is superstitious. This is wanting—that is superfluous. This is not right—that is awry. And so on with every thing that does not exactly square with their narrow minds, and ill-contrived dispositions. For, what the great St. Augustine truly said of the Separatists of his day, fourteen hundred years ago, is equally true of those of our day—"Nisi quod ipsi faciunt, nihil rectum existimant." They think nothing right but what they do themselves. In such presumption, arrogance, and pride, I am happy no longer to agree with you. Nevertheless,

I remain, Sir,

Your's most obediently,

L. S. E.

LETTER IX.

ON PRE-COMPOSED FIXED FORMS OF PRAYER.

SIR,

IN again resuming my pen, I will endeavour to state to you some of those reasons which have induced me to consider pre-composed set Forms of Prayer, in the public services of the Church, infinitely superior to extemporary forms. I am perfectly satisfied that there is no comparison. I have heard numerous extemporary effusions offered up, not only by you, but also by many of the first-rate Dissenting Teachers in the kingdom; but I never yet heard any worthy of being put in competition with our excellent and incomparable Liturgy. Having been a Dissenter for almost the first twenty-five years of my life, and accustomed to the lazy manner of Dissenting worship, I at first felt it rather irksome to sustain that unceasing attention which the Liturgy of the Church demands: but to this I very soon became reconciled, and instead of feeling it at all troublesome, as at first, I now esteem it a very great excellency. The various parts and admirable arrangement of the Liturgy have the effect of securing the attention, and of keeping alive the devotion, of the worshippers; and thereby preventing that drowsiness and indifference common to those Congregations, where none but the Minister can take an active part

in prayer to God. In the last Dissenting Meeting-house which I attended, I regularly sat about a year and a half in the same pew with the Minister's wife, who almost invariably slept during a great part of every service, including the time of the first prayer, which is generally long. This she could not have done with the use of the varying Liturgy of the Church. Those Dissenters who occasionally go to Church, generally complain that they find the variety of the Liturgy rather tedious; but, were they to attend more frequently, the objection would very soon vanish; and if they were really spiritually-minded, they would soon discover its excellence, and would, I am fully persuaded, much prefer it to extemporary prayer. The Service of the Church is, indeed, but ill adapted to idle and careless worshippers; such would be far more at their ease in a Dissenting Meeting-house, where they would have nothing to do all the time but to sit and look about them. But those desirous of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, will ever find it admirably adapted to every purpose of heartfelt, fervent devotion; for whatever may be their circumstances, situations, or necessities, it is ever suitable. They can want nothing but what it contains. Its language, also, is well worthy of the solemn purpose to which it is applied; for 'comprehensive fulness,' 'majestic simplicity,' rich chastity, and devotional sweetness of expression, it stands unrivalled within the whole compass of 'uninspired compositions.' And were our Congregations to join with their Ministers in the Liturgy with spirituality of mind and fervent devotion, our Churches would be like little heavens upon earth—they would in deed and in truth, be the very houses of God and the gates of heaven.

With a pre-composed Form of Prayer, persons can pray not only "with the spirit," but "with the *understanding* also." This it may be utterly impossible to do, when the prayers are *made* off-hand by the Minister. How often have I, in Meeting-houses, experienced the following case:—The person engaged

in prayer has uttered half his sentence—the people are expecting the remainder—he forgets what he was about to say—becomes confused—hacks at it—begins again—and at length concludes with something widely different from that with which he first began. Let the spirit be ever so happily framed, how can the *understanding* act in such a case as this? And when we consider what men ordinarily are—how difficult it is in prayer to fix the attention upon the sole object of worship, and how much the presence of a Congregation is calculated to occupy the thoughts,—should we wonder that such instances are very usual? Again: the people, instead of having their minds fixed upon high and heavenly things, are engaged with the speaker—canvassing the nature of his petitions, or criticising the language which he makes use of; at least there is something like a necessity to do the one, and a strong temptation to do the other;—so that on every hand this Dissenting practice opens a door to distraction of mind. This distraction about words and expressions, both the Clergy and the people, in the public service of the Church, entirely escape, by the use of their excellent Liturgy. Their undivided attention may be wholly fixed upon the Eternal God, the object of their worship and adoration. And knowing previously that every sentence they are about to use is agreeable to the Scriptures of Truth, they can pray “with the spirit, and with the *understanding* also.” The awful distance which exists between the Creator of the Universe and his creatures, ought to inspire them with the profoundest reverence and awe. How little in accordance with such feelings is the improper, hasty, off-hand language sometimes heard amongst Dissenters. All this—the vain repetitions, the ridiculous expressions, the great irreverence, and the disgusting familiarity which shock the mind of the pious Christian in the Meeting-house, are entirely and wisely prevented by the use of a pre-composed fixed Form of Prayer.

Another, and one of the greatest and most invaluable

excellencies of a pre-composed set Form of Prayer is, that its use effectually prevents the introduction of false doctrine and heresy into the worship of God. This is most clearly proved from the experience of almost three centuries: for whilst during that time great numbers of Dissenting Congregations have fallen into the damning gulf of Socinianism, the Church has not lost a single Congregation. "In a single western county of England, thirteen Socinian Congregations now exist, *eleven* of which were, within the last twenty years, Christian Societies."* "In the Church of Geneva, no sooner was the subscription to the Helvetic Confession (of Faith) abandoned, than Arianism took full possession of the chairs and pulpits. It is also a striking fact, that although Unitarianism has prevailed to a great degree in the Eastern States of America, and particularly in Boston, and has swept away many Orthodox bodies of Christians, it has not made its way into a single Episcopal Congregation. 'Persons accustomed to the Liturgy,' says a well-informed examiner, 'the instant any one comes to them, saying 'I deny the Trinity,' refer to their Prayer Books, and the fruit of such reference is, that since the Liturgy of the American Church was agreed upon collectively, not one Episcopal Congregation has fallen into Arianism.'"+ These, Sir, are undeniable facts—facts which prove at once the decisive superiority of Established Articles, and pre-composed Scriptural Forms of Worship, in preserving the Truths of the Gospel in a Church, to the raw and undigested and not unfrequently indigestible Articles and Prayers of Dissenters, made extempore, just according to the whim and humour of the moment. The nature of the Members of the Church of England is the same as that of Dissenters, and their constant adherence to the grand truths of Chris-

* See Christian Guardian, 1832, p. 370.

† Reasons for Attachment and Conformity to the Church of England, by the Rev. R. Meek, p. 75.

tianity, whilst so many Congregations of Dissenters have been carried down the stream of Independency into the dead sea of Socinianism, cannot be attributed to any inherent excellency which they possess above Dissenters, but under the blessing of God, entirely to the existence and influence of her sound Articles and Scriptural Liturgy. There are in this country, out of two hundred and fifty-eight, two hundred and thirty-five Dissenting Meeting-houses, which were once the "fountains of purer principles," now devoted to the propagation of the damnable doctrines of Socinianism. Now, Sir, it certainly cannot be said, that subscription to Articles of Faith, and the use of a pre-composed Form of Prayer, have been the cause of their awful departure from the faith they once professed, because they never had any. But it is, on the contrary, a self-evident truth—a truth undeniable, because established by positive fact and experience, that had the successive Ministers of these Meeting-houses been obliged to subscribe to sound Articles of Faith, and to use a Scriptural Liturgy, they would have been, every one of them, as is the case with every place of worship belonging to the Established Church, still the fountains of principles much purer than the blasphemous doctrines which they are now used to promulgate. Now, although I know you will not stick at a little, in order to support your sentiments when they are exposed to danger, yet I think you are scarcely prepared to say that the continual departure of such numbers of your Congregations to the proscribed ranks of Socinianism, is not an evil of magnitude incomparably greater than subscription to sound Articles of Faith and the use of a Scriptural Liturgy, which together would certainly have proved an effectual preventive. The sum of the matter, then, is simply this: that whilst you, without either Articles or a Liturgy, have lost two hundred and thirty-five Congregations, out of two hundred and fifty-eight, the Church, with her Articles and Liturgy, out of her many thousands, has not lost a single Congregation.

These are facts which require no comment—they speak for themselves, and prove to a demonstration that Scriptural Articles of Faith, and a pre-composed Scriptural Form of Prayer, are effectual in preserving in a Church the blessed truths of the everlasting Gospel.

You contend that pre-composed Forms of Prayer are unscriptural; but to speak in plain terms, it is false, and I had almost said that you know it to be so. For one would think that you cannot but know that there are pre-composed Forms of Prayer recorded in the Scriptures, some of which were expressly appointed by God himself. He commanded each Israelite thus : “And thou shalt speak, and say before the Lord thy God—A Syrian, ready to perish, was my father, &c. * * * I have brought the first fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me * * * Look down from thy holy habitation from Heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swearest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.”* The Lord commanded the Priests to bless the Children of Israel, always in one pre-composed set form of words, from which they were not allowed to deviate. “On this wise ye shall bless the Children of Israel, saying unto them: The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”† And when the ark set forward Moses prayed, and said, “Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee.” And when it rested, he said, “Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.”‡ Surely, Sir, if pre-composed Forms of Prayer were unscriptural, these could not have been found in the Scriptures. It seems the Israelites were not allowed to exercise their “extemporal wit” in making Prayers according to their own notions; and yet, I apprehend they were quite as capable of mak-

* Deut. xxvi.

† Num. vi. 23.

‡ Num. x. 35, 36.

ing Prayers off-hand as any modern Dissenter. It is, also, a well known fact, that the Jewish Priests always used a pre-composed set form, both in the service of the Temple and in that of the Synagogues; and our Saviour himself, when on earth, united with them in their pre-composed Prayers, and thus manifestly approved of the very thing of which you highly disapprove.* Were the use of pre-composed Prayers such a monstrous evil as you inculcate, our Lord would not only never have used them himself, but would at once have blamed the Jews for using them. But so far was him from doing this, that he not only sanctioned them by his own use, but actually commanded his Disciples to use a pre-composed Prayer, one, indeed, which he had himself composed or compiled, almost entirely from the Jewish Liturgies then in use, thus setting his heavenly seal to the very thing to which you so madly object.

But you say that the prayer which our Lord taught his Disciples to use, and which is, therefore, called "The Lord's Prayer," was only intended by Christ as a pattern of Prayer; but this objection is at once overturned by our Lord's own words, after his Disciples had desired him to teach them to pray; "he said unto them, when ye pray, SAY Our Father, &c."† Our Lord does not say to his Disciples, "when ye pray" make use of petitions or words *similar* to these, or, *arrange your Prayers in such order as this*.—No—he says expressly, "When ye pray, SAY." Say what? Why "Our Father, &c.," the very words which follow. This is certainly his meaning, if he means what he says; but if you have a mind to contend that the blessed Saviour was quibbling, and meant something different from what he said, you are welcome to such a worthy notion. I am aware that in opposition to the words of St. Luke you urge those of St. Matthew, as though

* The Pre-composed Prayers used by the Jews may be seen in Priedeaux's *Connexion*, Vol. 2, p. 172.

† Luke xi. 2.

the Evangelists were really opposed to each other, and their words not of equal authority. But not to notice that such a method of proceeding is of the true Infidel cast, I observe that the meaning of St. Matthew is exactly the same as that of St. Luke; his words are, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye, Our Father," &c.* The word here translated, "after this manner," is in the original, *οὕτως*, and literally means, *sic*, so, thus; and therefore, the words of St. Matthew would be perhaps better translated, "Thus, therefore, pray ye," or, "Therefore, pray ye thus, or so, "Our Father," &c. And that the Disciples understood from the word *οὕτως*, that they were to use the very words which Christ taught them, is evident from their so understanding him when he used the same word upon another occasion. When he told them to fetch him the colt, he said, "If any man shall say unto you why do ye loose him? *οὕτως*, thus, so, or after this manner shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him."† Here we find the same word *οὕτως* translated "thus" which, in St. Matthew is translated "After this manner." And we find that the Disciples understood that they were to use the very same words which he commanded them, for when they were asked "why loose ye the colt, they said, the Lord hath need of him;" they thus used the very same words which Christ ordered them, and not a word besides. If, then, when Christ told his Disciples to say "*οὕτως*, so, thus, or after this manner," they understood him to mean that they were to use the very words that he uttered, which is certain from their doing so, there can be no doubt whatever, but, that when he told them to "pray *οὕτως*, so—thus, or after this manner," they understood him to mean that they were to use the very words which he uttered. And if they understood him to mean so, there can be no doubt but he did mean so. Besides, had Christ intended to have given his Disciples a mere pattern or directory of Prayer, as you pretend, would he not

• Matt. vi. 9.

† Luke xix. 31.

have said so in general terms, telling them how to form, order, and arrange their prayers? Something, I imagine, similar to Watts's "Guide to Prayer;" whereas he did nothing of the kind, but simply told them, saying, "When ye pray, *say*, Our Father," &c. and we Church-folks, in spite of so much Dissenting *light*, are so incurably stupid as to believe that he meant exactly what he said; and in consequence of such stupidity, whenever we pray, we always use "The Lord's Prayer," and think it an honour to be reproached by Dissenters for doing so. And, notwithstanding assertions that the use of pre-composed Prayers are unscriptural, and when reproached by you for using the pre-composed Prayers of our admirable Liturgy, we appeal with pleasure and triumph to the Scriptures of Truth—to the practice of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles in joining in the pre-composed service of the Jewish Temple, and to the beautiful pre-composed Prayer which our Lord himself has condescended to leave us on record.

Having shown that pre-composed Forms of Prayer are Scriptural—sanctioned, authorised, and even commanded by our Lord himself, I will proceed to notice a few of your minor objections, one of which is, that the Liturgy of the Church of England is a mere human composition.* And, I pray, Sir, what are

* Mr. Scales says, page 84, "It would be inconsistent with Christ's dignity, and an abandonment of his office, as the supreme head and ruler over the house of God, to leave the form of its worship undetermined." This may sound well enough in the ears of ignorant Dissenters, but where is the sense of it? One can scarcely imagine the man who can write nonsense so glaring to be in his right senses. For, if Christ has determined the Form of Divine Worship, where is that Form? Where is that determination recorded? Why has not Mr. Scales told us? Where is his own Form of Worship to be found in the Scriptures? Where is it there said that the first part of Worship shall be singing—the second praying—the third singing—the fourth preaching—the fifth singing, and the sixth, or last, praying, as is the case in Dissenting Meeting-houses? Now, if Mr. Scales cannot tell us where Christ has determined the Form of Divine Worship, which we know he cannot do, what does his assertion amount to? What is it less than an insolent attack upon the Lord of Life and Glory himself? What is it but telling the Blessed Redeemer, that because he has not determined the Form of Worship, it is "inconsistent with his dignity, and an abandonment of his office?" Such are the dreadful lengths to which this man's assertions inevitably lead him.—He also says, "In the Word of God nothing is more severely condemned, or more peremptorily rejected, than will-worship and

your extemporary effusions? Are they any thing more than mere human compositions? Dare you say they are Divine? I know you will not say so in plain terms, but that is what you wish to insinuate. You wish to have it believed, that your extemporary off-hand Prayers, as well as your extemporary Preachments, are spoken by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and you succeed with but too many. But how shocking is the guilt of such blasphemous pretences? And, yet, how many poor, undiscerning, unwary souls, as well as numbers intoxicated with the fumes of fanaticism, or whose judgment has been scorched up by the heat of their enthusiastic brains, are unfortunately deceived by them, and thus become the deluded victims of those whose "mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration, because of advantage;"* and who "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple."†

Another of your objections is, that the Liturgy has been chiefly compiled from the Missal of the Church of Rome. A nice piece of craft, too, is this, and one, which you find very convenient, in duping those who know just as much about the Church of Rome as they do about the Church of England, and just as much about Dissent as they do about either. But suppose that were the case, to the extent you insinuate. What then? What is the consequence? Is every expression used, and every Doctrine believed by the Church of Rome polluted, and to be for ever cashiered?

human inventions." If this be true, what becomes of Dissent and Dissenting Worship? For what can Dissenting Worship possibly be else than "WILL-WORSHIP?" Does not every Dissenting Teacher pray just according to his own will? And upon the principles of Dissent, why may not every individual do the same? Has he not a right to worship just as he wills? What, then, can Dissenting Worship be but "WILL-WORSHIP," in every sense of the term? And what are all the prayers MADE off-hand but "human inventions," invented on and for the occasion, and exactly according to the whim, fancy, or WILL of the maker?

* Jude 16.

† Rom. xvi. 18.

The Devil, in tempting Christ, prostituted a beautiful passage of Scripture to his own base purposes. Is that any reason why that passage should be blotted from the page of inspiration, and never again used by Christians? The Church of Rome believes in the Trinity of the adorable Godhead, and so does the Devil, but is that any reason why we should not? To argue from the abuse of a thing against its use, is a degree beyond absurdity. But, by-the-bye, is it because the Church of Rome believes the Doctrine of the Trinity, that the Dissenting Dr. Watts and Dr. Doddridge have said some things which have led many to say that they denied it, and that such increasing numbers of Dissenters now deny that Doctrine?*

The Liturgy of the Church of England was compiled from the Liturgies of all the ancient Churches---from Liturgies that were in existence long before the Roman Missal, properly so called: and many of its inimitable Prayers, and particularly the Collects were, as a bare perusal of them will sufficiently testify, composed in a time of true Evangelical light and purity, and when Christianity was in her bridal attire. That the Liturgy of the Church of England has some expressions in common with the Roman Missal, I do not wish to deny, but that so much has been extracted, as to warrant your calling it a Popish Liturgy is false, and you must know it to be so, except you are entirely ignorant of the matter, which leaves you equally as culpable. The truth is, your object is to bring the Church into disrepute, no matter by what means. Your abuse of the Liturgy, therefore, is only one of the means you employ to accomplish your purpose, and is in perfect unison with your avowal, that "*pure attach-*

* "Dr. Doddridge was not only very weak in the faith on the great and fundamental doctrine of the Holy Trinity, (his opinions tending to the heresy of Sabellius); but it is a still more remarkable fact, that a great many," (I believe all except Joh Orton,) "of his pupils became Arians and Socinians. Priestley, Belsham, Kippis, &c. the most eminent" (Socinian) "Teachers of the last generation, imbibed their theology at the academy of Dr. Doddridge."

ment to Dissenting principles requires to be kept up in minds of a certain class by a KEEN HATRED, and now and then a little ROUND ABUSE of the Church." That this "certain class" of Dissenters is a very large one you are aware, and of course their motives for Dissenting from the Church, being founded upon "keen hatred and abuse," must be *most virtuous and praiseworthy*, and they are, no doubt, in your unmeaning cant, "*Dissenters on principle*," aye, and Dissenters of "*tender consciences*" too.

You also object that the Liturgy abounds in vain repetitions. If every repetition be vain, this is true; but then it is equally true, that the Scriptures abound with them also. To the sincere, humble, and devout Christian not a word will be vain, but properly felt and estimated throughout our incomparable Liturgy. But to cold, formal, and careless worshippers, not only every repetition, but also every *petition* will be vain. For I conceive that a petition may be equally as vain as a repetition, because the vanity of either consists in the manner of its being used, and not in the petition or repetition itself. *Vain* repetitions are forbidden in the Scriptures; but *repetitions* are not; for many are to be found in them, and, therefore, clearly authorised by them. In that delightful portion of God's Word, the Book of the Psalms, repetitions are numerous. I select the following:—"Truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant."* "Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until he have mercy upon us: have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us."† "Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding."‡ In the 118th Psalm, "His mercy endureth for ever," is repeated five times; and the last verse is a repetition of the first. In the 148th Psalm, "praise ye the Lord," or "praise ye Him," is repeated eight times in four verses. In the

* Psalm cxvi. 10. † Psalm cxxiii. 2, 3. ‡ Psalm xlvii. 6.

150th Psalm, there is a similar repetition thirteen times in six verses; and in the 136th Psalm, "His mercy endureth for ever," is repeated no less than *twenty-six* times in twenty-six verses. And besides all this, our Saviour himself, a few hours before his crucifixion, used repetitions in praying to his Father. The Evangelist tells us that, "he went away again and prayed the *third* time, saying the *same words*."* If, then, making use of repetition be sinful, we are in excellent company, we have our Lord for our exemplar—we have his conduct as a precedent—and whilst we follow in his steps we shall be safe, and need little regard the reproaches of interested and envious men, who themselves do the things which they lay to the charge of others. I have heard you, Sir, very frequently make use of repetitions in your extemporary Prayers; and the very last Minister I heard pray extempore, repeated the words "Remember the widow, the fatherless, and the orphan," three times over in about ten minutes, besides other repetitions. In short, if all repetitions be vain, then are those in the Scriptures vain, as are also those of our Lord himself; and instead of attacking the Liturgy attack the Bible at once, and attack the Lord of Life and Glory himself, and foil him first, for we will never forsake our standards whilst we have constantly before our eyes the great example of our glorious Leader—"the Captain of our salvation."

It is an undeniable truth, that pre-composed Forms of Prayer, or Liturgies, have been used from the very earliest ages of the Christian Church down to the present moment. And, as has been observed, "the strict harmony which is found to exist among all the most ancient Liturgies, strongly favours the belief that they were transmitted through the Apostles, who were of Jewish extraction, from the devotional parts of the Jewish Service. The Divinity of Christ was the great

* Matt. xxvi. 24.

point of contention; that pillar of our faith, like the pillar which parted the servants of God from the host of Egypt, was the grand barrier between the Christian and the Jew. It has been a light to these, but is a cloud and darkness to them; but with this exception, all memorials that have reached us of the Jewish Liturgies, conspire to prove the venerable antiquity of our own." And "Mr. Wheatly has also shown by sundry appeals to ancient Christian writers, that the three first centuries joined in the use of pre-composed set Forms of Prayer, besides the Lord's Prayer and Psalms, and that these were styled by so early a writer as Justin Martyr, who died in the year of our Lord 163, "Common Prayers;" by Origen, "Constituted Prayers;" and by Cyprian, "Solemn Prayers."—From hence the inference is fairly drawn, that a Liturgy composed for public use is warranted by the practice of our Saviour, of His Apostles, and of the Primitive Christians.* Indeed, every branch of the Universal Church of Christ always had its Public Liturgy; and no sect of *professing* Christians was to be found without one till after the glorious Reformation, when, with other bodies of Christians, the Church of England shook off the Popish yoke, under which she had so long groaned, and became again, as she had been previously to the Popish usurpation, an Independent Church. But some little time after the Protestantism of the Church of England, the bulwark of the Reformation, had been firmly established by our great Elizabeth, the Church of Rome, finding herself foiled in all her attempts to foist her idolatrous doctrines and practices upon our Church, adopted as her own the well-known maxim "Divide et vince," divide and conquer; and immediately sent emissaries, and employed Jesuitical Priests, to sow the seeds of Dissent in the kingdom, and cause divisions in the Church. This they did by inveighing against the Church, par-

* Hart's Answer to Gill's Reasons.

ticularly the Liturgy, and extolling extemporary Prayers, which they always used at their Dissenting Meetings. At the same time, to prevent any thing like suspicion, they did not forget to reproach the Church of Rome and the Pope in the severest terms. Thus was Dissent planted in England, and reared, you see, amongst the filth and corruption of the idolatrous and Apostate Church of Rome, and propagated by those legitimate sons of hell and Rome, the Jesuits and other Romish emissaries. In proof of this, take what follows:—"In the year 1567, the 9th of Elizabeth, one Faithful Commyn, a Dominican Friar, a person generally reputed a zealous Protestant, much admired and followed by the people for his seeming piety, but more particularly for inveighing in his pulpit most bitterly against Pius V. the Pope, was accused of being an impostor, and examined before the Queen and Privy Council, by M. Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury." His examination is too long to recite here; but in the course of it he confessed that he was a Jesuit, and that he had been ordained by Cardinal Poole. He had also the impudence to say, that he was possessed of the Spirit, and that he had many followers who joined with him in his spiritual and extemporary prayers "to God, that he would open the eyes of men to see their errors," and to whom he administered the Sacrament, or, as he himself said, "I have both given and taken the body of Christ to those of *tender consciences*, who have assembled with me in the fear of the Lord." Being asked where his Congregation was, he said, "Even in the wide world, among the flock of Christ, scattered over the whole earth." To which the Queen smartly replied, "Your diocese is very large, Mr. Commyn." The witnesses were then called in, and examined thus:—"The Queen: Mr. Draper, what have you to say to this Faithful Commyn?—Mr. Draper: He came to my house at the Maidenhead, in Maidstone, with several of his followers. I showed him a room; and per-

ceiving several to come and enquire for this Mr. Commin, and by chance going up stairs, I heard one groan and weep, which caused me to lift up the latch. At first I was startled, but enquiring of one of his followers what ailed the man, he replied, ‘Do you not see we be all at prayers?’ The maid, wondering where I was, came to seek me, and can testify the same.—*The Maid*: I saw this Faithful Commin, and thought he was distracted when I heard him pray; but the people said he was a heavenly man, and that it was God’s Spirit made him weep for the sins of the world.—*The Queen*: Mr. Commin, though you have preached against the Pope, yet you have usurped over the power both of Church and State.—*Faithful Commin*: Give me time to consider and prepare myself, and I shall give your Grace a further answer in a short space.—He was then bound over for his appearance for further examinaton to another day; but coming from the Council, he told his followers that her Majesty and the Council had acquitted him, and that he was warned of God to go beyond the seas, to instruct the Protestants there—that he had not a farthing to support him, yet being God’s cause, he would undertake it out of charity, &c. This speech set them a-weeping, especially the women, and £130 was collected for him, besides what the compassionate sex gave him unknown to their husbands. His followers said before the Council, in their opinions they had never seen so zealous and heavenly a man as he seemed to be, and discovered the particular sums of money of which this religious juggler had cheated these deluded people. Commin, in the meantime, had escaped out of England, got safe to Rome, and assured the Pope ‘that his spiritual and extemporary prayers had so much taken with the people whom he instructed, that the Church of England was become as odious to that sort of people, as Mass was to the Church of England:’—upon which the Pope gave him a reward of *two thou-*

*sand ducats, for his good service.** There is also an account in the Registry of Rochester, too long to quote, of one Th. Heth, a Jesuit, "who preached much against Popery, and particularly his own order—laboured to refine Protestants, to take off all smacks of Popery, and show his good-will in making the Church purer. He was discovered by a letter, which he dropt in the pulpit, from the Fraternity of Jesuits; and upon sending to his lodgings upon search, his beads were found in his boots, with a license from the Fraternity, and a Bull from Pius V., to preach what doctrine that Society pleased for dividing Protestants, &c." Other instances might be adduced did my limits permit; but these will suffice to show the origin of those superstitious fanatics, the Puritans, of whom modern Dissenters are the sons, and who were far better hands at purifying their pulpit cushions than either the Church or their own over-heated brains. It is, indeed, a well-authenticated historical truth, that the originators and ringleaders of the first Puritans were Romish Priests, who, with Commin and Heth, impudently affirmed that their object was "*to make the Church purer.*" This, like true Jesuits, they pretended would be accomplished by the abolition of Episcopacy, and the substitution of extemporary prayer for the Liturgy. They wisely foresaw, that in case they could succeed in raising up a shoal of ignorant, pretending fanatics and religious adventurers, by railing at Episcopacy, and contending that it was right for any man that pleased to take upon himself the office of the Ministry, all thinking, sensible men would be disgusted, and the Reformation brought into disrepute. Neither were they without hope of overthrowing the Protestantism of the Church of England by these means, and of ultimately re-

* See Foxes and Firebrands p. 7. Also, "The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists considered, by Bishop Lavington," p. 168, 169. This is a good Work, and ought to be read by every Clergyman, and every intelligent and sober Christian. The enthusiasm and shocking blasphemies of our Dissenting Fanatics are there shown up in proper style.

establishing Popery on its ruins. They well knew that Episcopacy and the Liturgy must either stand or fall together; because, if any man have a right to take upon himself the office of the Ministry, he certainly has a right, as a matter of natural consequence, to use what sort of prayers, and to act as he pleases. The Protestant Church of England is now, as she always has been, the greatest bulwark against Popery; and could the Papists only destroy Protestant Episcopacy—the object of their irreconcilable hatred, they would, as to Protestantism, be comparatively easy; because men could then have no choice but that which would exist between “the Church of Rome and no Church at all.” Nothing can please the Papists better than the general conduct of Dissenters; for they see clearly that they are doing their work for them, far more effectually than they could do it for themselves.*

And, besides, the great variety of Heretical and Schismatical sects of Dissenters in the Protestant world, supply the Papists with the most powerful argument against the Reformation that they are able to produce. They gladly seize upon the following untenable principles, and falsely representing them as the bases of the Reformation, draw from them consequences highly derogatory to that glorious event. But they are not the principles of the Reformation, but the unscriptural “principles of Dissent,” which are just as widely different from the principles of the Reformation and from the Scriptures of Truth, as the principles and doctrines of Popery itself are. The principles are these: “That no Christian has authority to be ruler over

* A Clergyman, now in Wales, was walking, just before the “Emancipation” Bill was passed, in company with a Papist, from Bradford to Leeds (Yorkshire); and while conversing on “Emancipation,” the Clergyman expressed his surprise that Papists and Dissenters, as religious antipodes, should UNITE in that business, and against the Church generally. The Papist candidly avowed to this effect, “We are glad of the help of Dissenters in any measure to pull down the Church, and when that is once done, we can soon kick the Dissenters out of the country.”—And only think of O’Connell, the begging Agitator, viewing the publications of the Dissenting Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society “WITH HIGH APPROBATION.” Is the great Popish Mendicant about to turn Dissenter?

another in matters of religion,—that so far as any human authority is concerned, every one has a right to interpret Scripture as he pleases, to believe what he pleases, and to worship God in what way he pleases.” They then proceed to shew, and very justly so too, that upon such principles “no Heresy can be convicted,—no order, no Ministry, no discipline, no form or appearance of a visible Society be preserved in the Church;—that they are destructive of all Church authority and all Ecclesiastical Polity;—and then, since it may be proved to any reasonable man, that an external order and polity were instituted in the Church by Christ and his Apostles, and that without them it could not subsist, the conclusion must appear unavoidable to him;—that the Reformation cannot be defended but upon such principles as contradict an institution of Christ and his Apostles, and are in their consequences subversive of the Christian Religion, and what his next reference must be needs not be suggested.”* But, as before stated, the unscriptural principles from which these destructive consequences are legitimately and fairly drawn, are the “principles of Dissent,” and not the principles upon which the Reformation is based, as is artfully insinuated by the Romish Jesuits. And whilst, therefore, the glorious Reformation is not affected by the consequences of those infernal principles, they fall with overwhelming power upon Dissent,—will for ever afford an unanswerable argument against it, and a sufficient proof to any but its deluded adherents, of its unscriptural character. Your attempts to justify Dissent, upon the principles of the Reformation, as the same cause does not exist for it, are sheer sophistry. For whilst the corrupt doctrines and idolatrous practices of Popery are such as to render the Salvation of a Papist, barely, if at all possible, you are forced to confess that “*The Church professes the life-giving doctrines of the Gospel.*”†

* See “The Church of England defended from the attacks of Modern Dissenters,” p. 24. A cheap and capital Tract, nervously written.

† Eclectic Rev. Dec. 1829.

But upon the principles of Dissent there can be no such thing as Heresy or Schism; separation is not only justifiable but commendable. To hear Dissenters, therefore, branding those who separate from them with the sin of Schism,—and lamenting so pathetically as Mr. James and others do their numerous distractions, defections, and divisions, is so glaringly inconsistent with their own principles, that it is most amusing.

But, in returning to the subject more particularly in hand, I do conceive that extemporary Prayer is far more objectionable than extemporary Preaching—they are widely different—for in Preaching, the Minister only addresses those who are his equals and fellow-mortals, and, therefore, needs not to be so particular with regard to his matter and words. But, in addressing the Triune Jehovah—the Great and Eternal God—before whom all “nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance”—nay, as nothing: “and less than nothing and vanity,” the mind ought to be filled with the greatest reverence, awe, and solemnity;—every sentiment ought to be expressed in the most appropriate language, and every word ought to be properly applied; but all this is absolutely impossible when praying extempore. I have frequently heard the Almighty addressed by extempore Prayer-makers, in language in which they would have been ashamed to have addressed one of their fellow-creatures. It has been confused, incoherent, tautological, and frequently most impious—to say nothing of the ranting manner of its delivery. A Dissenter, complaining, says, “The mode of conducting the devotional part of our worship is not always so solemn nor methodical as may be desired. Sometimes it partakes of an *odious familiarity*, at others of too much *grimace*. What is called Preaching in Prayer should always be avoided; and to hear the Deity addressed, as is sometimes the case, in *scraps of poetry*, is quite insufferable.”* Now, if the

* Remarks, &c. p. 47.

only benefit or advantage of a set Form of Prayer, was to prevent such proceedings as these, it would alone be sufficient to prove its vast superiority over extemporaneous effusions. As to the Liturgy being a Form, why the very Sacraments are Forms, and Religion can no more exist without Forms, than a Church or Meeting-house, can exist without walls. Extemporaneous Prayer is just as much a Form to all, except the Minister, as the Liturgy. For "using a Form of Prayer is, in other words, presenting our petitions to God in the words of another; this the worshipper in the Meeting-house, who prays to God in the words of the Minister, does as much as the Member of the Church of England, who prays in the words of the Liturgy. Many Dissenting Ministers * * are accustomed to pre-compose, at least to arrange, the matter of their Prayers, to be offered up in public."* Some get off a sort of skeleton, selected chiefly from Watts's Guide to Prayer, and which serves for all occasions by being simply dressed up in different language. Indeed most, if not all, have a pre-arranged set Form according to which they pray. You have one yourself; for I could always tell by the arrangement of your Prayer in what part of it you were, for you generally used the same petitions frequently in the very same words in just about the same part. Where, then, can be the difference between praying in the pre-composed "Forms of the Liturgy, and praying in the pre-composed Forms of the Minister?" Why are not Forms of Prayer just as good printed on paper as imprinted upon the brains of Dissenting Teachers?

Besides, your own practice is totally at variance with all your theoretical professions. A great part of Watts's Psalms and Hymns, and of Rippon's and Burder's Selections, are just as purely pre-composed set Forms of Prayer as any of those contained in the Liturgy. And all the difference is, you *sing* your Forms of

* Reasons for Attachment and Conformity, &c. p. 125.

Prayer, and we *read* ours. Yours are, indeed, frequently both read and sung, being often given out by every two lines previously to the people's singing them, than which nothing can be conceived more mechanically formal. What difference there is between pre-composed Forms of Prayer in poetry and the same in prose I have yet to learn; you will, perhaps, have the goodness to inform me. You acknowledge that the matter of our Liturgy is excellent; and were it only turned into poetry, I presume you would not object to make use of it. An excellent Divine remarks, "We may pray spiritually by Form, and we may pray formally and coldly without one. Suppose I were to say to a converted Dissenter, 'Sir, you do not sing the praises of God spiritually.' He would ask, 'Why not?' Was I to answer, 'Because you sing by a Form. Dr. Watts's Psalms and Hymns are all pre-composed, they are all Forms in the strictest sense of the word.' The good man would reply, 'True, they are pre-composed Forms, but I can sing them very spiritually for all that.' I should rejoin, 'And I can pray in the words of the Liturgy as spiritually as you can sing in the words of Dr. Watts.'" To be consistent, and not to do the same things for which you condemn us, you ought certainly to use extemporary Hymns as well as extemporary Prayers. "I have heard," says the Rev. J. Newton, in his *Apologia*, "of a Minister who used to compose Hymns in the pulpit. It was his custom to give out one line, and by the time the Congregation had sung the first he had a second ready for them, and so on, so long as he thought proper to sing. These were not Forms, they were composed *pro re nata*. Before he had finished a second stanza, the former (as to verse and cadence) was in a manner forgotten, and the same Hymn was never heard twice. I know not what these unpremeditated pieces were in point of composition; but were I persuaded of the unlawfulness of Forms of Prayer, and at the same time approved of the practice of singing in Public Worship,

I should extremely covet the talent of extempore Hymn-making, as one of the most necessary gifts a Minister could possess, in order to maintain a *consistency* in his whole service."

Your inconsistency is also further manifest in your teaching your children to use pre-composed Forms of Prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer, and other little Prayers. Now if the use of Forms of Prayer is so exceedingly wrong as you pretend it is, I really wonder that you should teach your children to use them. And with the greatest inconsistency, Mr. Jay, a Dissenting Minister, has published a volume of pre-composed Forms of Prayer for domestic use, which was with equal inconsistency highly recommended by that enemy to Forms of Prayer, the Evangelical Magazine. But this is not all; you are aware that many Dissenting Ministers have lately began to use the very Liturgy itself—the poor, condemned Liturgy of the Church. A Dissenter, in a lamenting mood, after condemning the use of the gown by Dissenting Teachers, which he terms "a matter of no importance in itself, *but* as a symbol of conformity !!!" says, "many have gone so far as to adopt the Liturgy, and habit themselves in a white surplice. The object for so doing is apparent, and it may answer very well as a matter of financial speculation; but" "whilst these practices continue, no one can say that the taunts which are continually thrown at Dissenters are unmerited; nor will they escape the sarcasm of their enemies, until they adopt some contrivance for keeping their party more pure and unmixed."* This same writer, in another place, seems to prefer the use of a Liturgy. He acknowledges that pre-composed Forms of Prayer have their advantages; "but the feeling of Dissenters being generally against them," appears to him a sufficient reason for not using them. Thus does this time-server truckle to the whims of the multitude rather than act according

* Remarks, &c. p. 50.

to the dictates of his own conscience. Another Dissenting Writer and Minister, having a little more candour, says, "I am inclined to prefer the use of a Liturgy in Public Worship in connexion with free Prayer, to either the one or the other exclusively and alone."* Dr. Morrison also, although himself a Dissenter, has translated the Morning and Evening Services of the Church of England into the Chinese language, for the use of his Chinese converts. A Mr. C. H. Thompson also, sent out by the London Missionary Society as a Missionary among the Malays, conceiving that the Morning and Evening Prayers of the Church would prove an acceptable present to that people in general, immediately translated them into their language. Mr. Robert Hall, late of Bristol, speaks very decisively in favour of our admirable Liturgy; he says, "Though a Protestant Dissenter, I am by no means insensible to its merits; I believe that the Evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastened fervour of its devotions, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions." And the Eclectic Review, the organ of Dissent, makes this confession:—"The Church it cannot be denied professes the life-giving doctrines of the Gospel, favours every great principle rescued from Rome by the Reformers, and puts into the lips of the people a language of devotion unrivalled in majesty, beauty, propriety, and comprehension."† What more, I ask, could the most devoted friend of the Church say in her favour? And where is the propriety, consistency, or honesty of this Review, when, after passing such a high encomium upon the Church, it recommends "A KEEN HATRED, and now and then a little ROUND ABUSE of the Church," in order, as it is confessed, to keep up "pure attachment to Dissenting principles." Really, Sir, how praiseworthy it is to the Church to be op-

* Fiat Justitia, p. 53.

† Dec. 1829.

posed by such enemies and such means! In what way could Dissenters confer upon her such a high degree of honour? The fact is, without belying and slandering the Church and her Clergy, Dissenting Teachers could not support the "Dissenting Interest;" and if the "Dissenting Interest" be not supported, the "Dissenting Ministers' Interest," namely, their salaries, could not be kept up; and hence the reason for "*keen hatred, abuse,*" slander, and falsehood.

You profess to have great respect for the opinion of the venerable Calvin, how justly I say not; but if his opinion be worth any thing in reference to one thing, why not to another? In a letter of his, to the Protector Somerset, dated October 29, 1548, he says, "I do highly approve that there should be a fixed Form of Prayer, and Ecclesiastical Rites, from which it should not be lawful for the Pastors, in the discharge of their function to depart. 1. That provision may be made for the ignorance and unskilfulness of some. 2. That the consent of all the Churches among themselves may appear. 3. That order may be taken against the unsettled levity of such as delight in innovations. So, also, there ought to be an established Catechism, an established Administration of the Sacraments, and also a public Form of Prayer."* Thus thought, and thus deliberately wrote the great Calvin. He thought, that without a fixed Form of Prayer, unity, the bond of Communion in the Church of Christ, could not be maintained.

A Dissenting writer, before quoted, complains lustily of the want of uniformity in singing amongst Dissenters. He says, "the numerous collections of Hymns

* "Formulam precum et rituum Ecclesiasticorum valde probo, ut certa illa exstet; à quâ ne Pastoribus discedere in functione suâ liceat. 1. Ut consulatur quorundam simplicitati et imperitiæ. 2. Ut certius constet omnium inter se ecclesiarum consensus. 3. Ut obviam meatur desultoriæ quorundam levitati qui novationes quasdam affectant. Sic igitur statum esse Catechismum oportet, statum Sacramentorum Administrationem publicam item precum Formulam."

that are continually starting up," are "not only a *nuisance*," but "destructive of that *uniformity* which is desirable in Public Worship." But, why is not uniformity of Prayer quite as "desirable in Public Worship," as uniformity of singing? I see not a single reason why it should not; and, I think, it will puzzle you to discover one, or any thing like one. Without uniformity, how can Christians maintain unity—how can they "*agree* on earth, as touching any thing they shall ask," so as to have reason to hope "it shall be done for them of their Father, which is in heaven."* There cannot be any agreement, when the Minister prays extempore, because the people are utterly ignorant of every one of the petitions until they are uttered; and then they may be uttered too fast for any one to consider them so attentively as to know whether he can agree in them or not. But if any man imagine that there are peculiar advantages connected with extemporary Prayer, he can enjoy them as well at Church, as he can in a Meeting-house; for if he only shuts up his Prayer Book while the Liturgy is reading, it will be extemporary Prayer to him, to all intents and purposes. Our Saviour himself joined in pre-composed Forms of Prayer, and never once blamed the use of them; but he was no great friend to those who prayed extempore, or *made* their Prayers; he told his Disciples to beware of them, who, "for a shew *make* long Prayers."† But long as were the prayers of the Pharisees of Christ's days, it seems, that they are left far behind by some of the Pharisees of our days. The Dissenting Mr. James says, that some of his Brethren *make* Prayers not long only, but "*outrageously* long, and dull" too. "We are often," he says, "prayed into a good frame, and then prayed out of it again. It is, also, to be regretted, that the Prayers are so much alike in the arrangement of the parts."‡ This is because, as I

* Matt. xviii. 19.

† Luke xx, 47.

‡ Page 66.

before said, most of those who pray extempore have a sort of skeleton formed from Watts's Guide to Prayer, and treasured up in their memories, and according to which their Prayers are of course arranged.

Spiritual pride, Sir, is at the bottom of Dissent, that is the source of all your extemporary Prayers and Preachments. I object not to extemporary Preaching, provided it be conducted with propriety, and the people be not deluded with the idea of the speaker's being inspired; but this is not always the case, to the disgrace of Religion. Mr. James confesses that Dissenting Teachers occupy so much of their time "in running about the country to attend public meetings," where they can shew off a little, and "in gossiping from house to house" "that their sermons are poverty itself, or a mere repetition of the same sentiments in the same words,"* and we may safely conclude that their prayers are no better, if not worse. And no sober-minded man can hear the high-flown language, and the bombastic nonsense made use of in the prayers of those "pulpit fops" just arrived from the Dissenting Academies, without being disgusted at the profanity and unhallowed expressions with which they address the Lord of Hosts. High-sounding words and phrases are used, of which neither Teacher nor people properly understand the meaning, and which are foisted into the prayers and sermons for no other purpose than to impress the ignorant with the "huge idea" of the Minister's "prodigious larnin." In a large village in which I once lived myself, there was a Dissenting Teacher who was considered a gifted brother, a good preacher and prayer maker, but who, in one of his extemporary effusions, actually prayed for "*the spirit of concupiscence!!*" The poor man with all his gifts, was no doubt ignorant of the meaning of the word. Such, however, was the case; although, as it afterwards turned out, he had, for his part, but little reason

to make use of such a petition; for although a married man, he held illicit intercourse with a woman who lived in a village where he went occasionally to preach. At your Prayer Meetings, too, I have really heard many pray in the most unintelligible gibberish imaginable. Scarcely able to utter three words orderly, they take upon them to babble out the most hideous, long, and stuttering prayers, in which they irreverently repeat every few words, O heavenly Father, O merciful Father, O thou glorious God, O blessed Jesus, O thou dear Redeemer, O most holy Saviour, and so on, with other such *vain repetitions*; and all things so foolishly jumbled and packed together, that their praying resembles more than any thing else, the babbling of a fool, desirous of telling some great tale, but unable to hit it. And after the meetings are over, the talents, gifts, and graces of the several performers, are generally the subjects of no little whispering. "What an excellent gift," says one, "brother so and so has! He enjoyed great liberty in Prayer, did he not? Poor brother so and so, how confused he was, he really has no talent at all; it is a great pity to call upon him to engage in Prayer, is it not? I did not enjoy so much freedom myself, to night, as I sometimes do, didn't you think so? What did you think of the remarks I made upon the chapter I read? Did you think them at all to the purpose?" and other similar remarks, evidently resulting from that spiritual pride, and self-righteous spirit, so prominent amongst Dissenters, and in which Dissent itself originates. I may also remark that Dr. Goodwin, one of Cromwell's chaplains, assured the miserable tyrant, as if by Divine Revelation, "a few minutes before his death, that he was not to die; after he was dead he challenged (blamed) God for not sparing him longer, and praying, said 'thou hast deceived us, and we are deceived.'" Mr. Sterry, another of Cromwell's chaplains "thus prayed for the new Protector, 'Make him, O Lord, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his per-

son.' "!!! Dr. Owen and Dr. Goodwin were present at this blasphemous impiety!!* The following also are parts of extemporary prayers used by Dissenting schismatics. "O God, O God, many are the hands lifted up against us, but there is one God, it is thou thyself, O Father, who doest us more mischief than them all."† "If thou dost not finish the good work thou hast begun in the reformation of the Church, thou wilt shew thyself to be the God of confusion, and such a one as by cunning stratagems hast contrived the destruction of thine own children."‡ I could produce many other instances of the blasphemous nonsense and monstrous impieties of extempore praying schismatics; but enough, I am sure, has been said, to satisfy any unprejudiced person, that if pre-composed set Forms of Prayer, had no other advantage, than that of preventing the use of such irreverent and abominably wicked expressions, it would be amply sufficient to prove their vast superiority over extemporary prayers. Indeed, I am satisfied that if all the extemporary prayers which are made use of by Dissenting Teachers, were taken down, and printed, just exactly as they uttered them, they would themselves be utterly ashamed of them. I can truly say, that the more I hear and see of extemporary praying, and the more I reflect upon the pride and the irreverence and wickedness connected with it, the more heartily thankful do I feel for our excellent and incomparable Liturgy, acknowledged to be so even by our Dissenting enemies.

I cannot conclude this subject better than in the words of Dr. Comber, in the preface to his "Companion to the Temple." "Though all Churches in the world have, and ever had, Forms of Prayer, yet none was ever blessed with so comprehensive, so exact, and so inoffensive a composure as ours, which is so judiciously contrived, that the wisest may exercise at

* See Burnett's History of Own Times, Anno. 1659.

† Mr. Robinson at Southampton, Aug. 25, 1643.

‡ Mr. Crosse at St. Mildred's, in the Compter, July 6, 1643.

once their knowledge and devotion, and yet so plain that the most ignorant may pray with the understanding ; so full that nothing is omitted which is fit to be asked in public, and so particular that it compriseth most things which we would ask in private, and yet so short as not to tire any that has true devotion. Its doctrine is pure and primitive, its ceremonies so few and innocent, that most of the Christian world agree in them ; its method so exact and natural, its language significant and perspicuous, most of the words and phrases being taken out of the Holy Scriptures, and the rest are the expressions of the first and purest ages ; so that whoever takes exception at these, must quarrel with the language of the Holy Ghost, and fall out with the Church in her greatest innocence ; and in the opinion of the most impartial and excellent Grotius, (who was no member of, nor had any obligation to, this Church,) the English Liturgy comes so near to the primitive pattern, that none of the Reformed Churches can compare with it. Whoever desires to worship God with zeal and knowledge, spirit and truth, purity and sincerity, may do it by these devout forms. And to this end may the God of Peace give us all meek hearts and quiet spirits, and devout affections, and free us from all sloth and prejudice, that we may have full Churches, frequent prayers, and fervent charity ; that uniting in our prayers here, we may all join in his praises hereafter, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

To this, Sir, I heartily subscribe, as also

Myself,

Yours, obediently,

L. S. E.

LETTER X.

ON THE BAPTISMAL AND BURIAL SERVICES.

SIR,

HAVING spoken of the Liturgy generally, I will now make a few remarks upon one or two of those particular parts of it, to which you object. The first is, the Baptismal Service; you object to this because the Church, you say, there teaches baptismal regeneration. Now, without entering into a lengthened discussion upon this much-disputed point, I remark, that whatever the Church teaches, I will shew that you Dissenters believe that children are regenerated by Baptism. Baptism is a Divine and spiritual Ordinance, and is either of some spiritual benefit to the child, or it is not. Now, if it is of no spiritual benefit, why do you practice it yourselves? And if it is, what is that spiritual benefit? Mr. Scales gives the answer, when he says that Baptism is “a Christian Ordinance, *a sign and a means of grace*.” We claim for it,” says he, “all that Christ intended by it, when he appointed it to be *the rite of initiation* into his visible Church.”* Now, there is not a Churchman in existence that claims any thing at all more for it, or who does not simply believe it to be neither more nor less than “a Christian Ordinance, *a sign and a means of grace*,—

* Scales, p. 273.

the rite of initiation into Christ's visible Church." Churchmen believe that the child is, after Baptism, and by "*means*" of it, what he was not before it—a Member of Christ's Church. Mr. Scales truly says, that it is "*a sign and a means of grace*," or, in the words of the Church Catechism, "an outward and visible *sign* of an inward and spiritual grace," and "*a means* whereby we receive the same." Mr. Scales calls it "*a means of grace*," that is, "*a means*" whereby divine grace is communicated to the child;—"a means" whereby the child receives grace;—"a means" whereby the child becomes a partaker of divine grace; which grace, thus communicated and received by or through Baptism, is the thing signified by the "*sign*," that is, by Baptism. Thus, Baptism is, as Mr. Scales truly calls it, both "*a sign and a means of grace*;"—the "*means*" of its communication, and the "*sign*" of its reception. Now, then, if Baptism be, as Mr. Scales says it is, "*a means of grace*" to the child, and the child thereby receives grace by or through it; as the *means*, the child becomes a partaker of grace; and as grace is divine and spiritual, the child becomes, of course, a partaker of divine and spiritual grace: *and what a regenerated character is more than this*, I am at a loss to imagine. Dissenters themselves believe that no unregenerated person is a partaker of divine grace; that the very first grace communicated to a person is regenerating grace: therefore, whatever Churchmen believe, Mr. Scales and his brethren believe in *baptismal regeneration*, or that children are regenerated by Baptism. For, if Baptism be "*a means of grace*,"—a means whereby the child receives grace, and regeneration be the first grace communicated, then does the child receive the grace of regeneration by or through Baptism as the *means*. But, if the child does not receive regenerating grace by or through Baptism as the *means*, the question is, what grace does it thus receive? Of what grace is Baptism the means and the sign? Again, as the Holy Spirit is the glorious agent who

conveys or communicates all grace, it must be he who communicates grace to the child by or through Baptism as the means, and if the grace thus communicated be the grace of regeneration, the child may very properly be said to be regenerated with, or by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, Mr. Scales, speaking of the Primitive Churches, says, "the elements of these Churches were regenerated, holy characters;* and he repeatedly gives us to understand that Dissenting Churches are like them;—Churches of Christ, composed of "regenerated, holy characters." And, therefore, when he baptizes a child and receives it into his Church, that child of course becomes a regenerated character, made so by Baptism—the rite by which he was initiated into a Church composed of "regenerated and holy characters." Should Mr. Scales deny that the child is regenerated by Baptism, he places himself in an awkward predicament; for he must then either deny that Baptism is "a sign and means of grace," or that it is "the rite of initiation" into his Church, or that his Church is composed of "regenerated characters." Dissenters in this, as in every thing else, take very good care to contradict their theory by their continual practice.

At the same time, it is almost impossible to tell what they do believe, or what they mean; they cannot know themselves, for though they assert that Baptism is "the *rite* of initiation into Christ's visible Church," they continually deny it in their practice of admitting persons into Membership with them. For, although a person may have been Baptized in his infancy by a Dissenting Minister himself, and thus received into his Church; yet should that person afterwards desire to be considered as a Member of that Church, the Minister directly denies that his Baptism was "the rite of initiation" into his Church, and that he is, therefore, not a

* Scales, p. 93.

Member of it. And, if he wish to enter the Church, he must submit to *another* "rite of initiation," or mode of admission. In the first place, his wish must be signified to the Church; a couple of Members, generally Deacons, are then deputed by the Church to wait upon him, to converse with him, and to examine him respecting his spiritual experience, to see whether he has a "tender conscience" or not, and so on. After sitting in judgment upon him, they deliver their opinion respecting him, to the Church, and if their account be satisfactory, a day is appointed for his "coming before the Church." He then "comes before the Church;" that is, not before all those who have been Baptized, but before all those who have received *another* "rite of initiation," and tells them that he has been converted—that he has a "weak and tender conscience,"—that he wishes to be a "Dissenter on principle,"—that he knows that "pure attachment to Dissenting principles requires to be kept up by a keen hatred, and now and then a little round abuse of the Church"—that his own "attachment to Dissenting principles" has been much strengthened by such holy and heavenly means, and that he has no doubt but it can "be kept up" by the same very charitable, Christian-like, and Evangelical means. After he has finished his "*experience*," he withdraws, while those who have received the *second* "rite of initiation," consult about the matter, which is finally put to the vote; and should the candidate be so fortunate as to have a majority of hands held up in his favour, he is then called in, and told that the Church has received him, and that he is consequently a Member, the Minister taking him by the hand as the "*sign*" of it. Thus ends this unscriptural and superstitious "rite of initiation,"—a mere fantastical farce. How absurd, therefore, is it for Dissenters to say that Baptism is "*the* rite of initiation" into the Church, when they in their practice invariably deny it to be such, and supersede it by a ceremonious invention of their own. Instead of calling Baptism "*the* rite," they

ought to call it "*a rite*," or "*one of their rites of initiation*," for they have clearly two, whether they are to be found in the Bible or not. They, however, tell us, and that repeatedly, "that the Word of God is their only rule of faith and practice." But it is a good thing that we are not obliged to believe them. Having the Word of God in our hands, we plainly see that "they reject the commandments of God, that they may keep their own traditions."

Speaking of the mode of the admission of Members amongst the Independents, a Dissenter says, "I here allude to the custom of requiring a Confession of Faith, a subscription to a Church-covenant, or a recital of spiritual appearances, commonly termed an '*experience*.' For this heavy burden which they have laid upon men's shoulders, there is not the least warrant either from Scripture or common sense." He says, "To illustrate the subject, I will suppose a case: Some pious country gentleman is desirous of joining a neighbouring Dissenting Congregation. The Pastor is, *perhaps*, a respectable man, but his Deacons in an humble station of life,—say the gentleman's *tailor and shoemaker*. These are deputed by the Church to wait upon him, for the purpose of taking a *measure of his conscience*, and of enquiring into his spiritual attainments. After sitting in judgment upon him, they report to the Church, and if their account be satisfactory, a day is appointed for his admission, when he has to pass through the ordeal before mentioned. I am well aware that this is not the uniform practice, the loose connection subsisting amongst Dissenters allowing of *every variety of Form*."* And yet all these *various* Forms, I suppose, they wish us to believe, are to be found in the Word of God.

Thus it appears, that although Dissenters say that Baptism is *the* "rite of initiation" into their Churches, they have *another* "rite of initiation" of their own in-

* Remarks, &c., p. 30.

vention, which they prefer to the one ordained by God. For, although a person may have been initiated into the Church by Baptism, the Ordinance of God, he is not considered by them as entitled to the privileges of Membership. He is not considered, indeed, a Member until he shall have submitted to that "rite of initiation" which they have themselves ordained ;—"thus ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."* Baptism is rendered null and void, and of none effect, by their own invention, which is as destitute of common sense as it is of Scriptural foundation. Taking it for granted, however, that Baptism is what Mr. Scales defines it to be, "a sign and a means of grace," one thing seems to be unquestionable, that whatever the Church believes, Dissenters certainly believe in baptismal regeneration.

With regard to the Burial Service, but a few remarks will be necessary to shew the nature and spirit of the objections of your Dissenting fraternity. Sometimes the Church is stigmatized as being too uncharitable, but here she is said to be far too charitable ; so that, act as she may, she will never be right with this "sect of determined dissatisfactionists." The part of the Service to which you particularly object, is this : "We, therefore, commit his body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of *the* resurrection to eternal life." By "*the* resurrection to eternal life," the Church evidently means the general resurrection. This is very clear, for in the Burial Service to be used at Sea, she says, "We, therefore, commit his body to the deep, looking for *the* resurrection of the body when the sea shall give up her dead,"—which of course will be at the general resurrection. The meaning of the words "*the* resurrection," in both these passages, is synonymous, and by them the Church means "the general resurrection at the last day ;" and, therefore, expresses just no opinion at all by them, respecting the eternal state of the person over whom they are used.

* Mark, vii. 13.

Dissenters, however, are determined to have it otherwise. They will have it, that by "the resurrection to eternal life," the Church means the resurrection to eternal life of every individual indiscriminately, over whom the service is read, whatever might have been his previous character. And in order that their objection may appear the more valid, they generally misquote the passage. Instead of reading "*the* resurrection," they read "*a* resurrection," and then say, that the Church means a resurrection of that particular body then buried to eternal life. And so perverse are they, that if even shewn to the contrary, they will scarcely believe their own eyes. A Clergyman told me some time since, that he was once riding in a stage coach with a Dissenting Teacher, who was also Tutor of one of the Dissenting Academies, and in their conversation, the Dissenting Tutor misquoted the passage as above, and though repeatedly told by the Clergyman that he did not quote it correctly, he still insisted that he did. The Clergyman, therefore, on the arrival of the coach at the inn, requested the loan of a Prayer Book, and took it to the coach to the worthy Tutor, to convince him. The *good* man, however, in spite of all the attempts of the Clergyman, to show him the book, resolutely refused to look at it. Such is the nature of the objections, and such the conduct of some pious Dissenters, as they wish to be considered.

The Church, in this service, as well as on other occasions, very wisely proceeds on the charitable side of the question. For what has she or her Ministers to do, with sitting as Judges as to the eternal happiness or misery of any of those who professed to die in the Faith? How can mortal man dare to be so presumptuous, as to usurp a prerogative which belongs to Him alone, who knoweth the hearts of all flesh. The Judge of all the earth will do right, and in his hands we ought, whatever our own thoughts may be, to leave the eternal destiny of those who depart this life, and to prove *our own* work whether *that* be of God or not,

and to examine *ourselves* whether *we* be in the Faith, and whether that Faith be productive of good works or not, and whether we are preparing for eternity or not. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Judge not that ye be not judged."

In the words, "that we may rest in Christ as *our hope* is, this our brother doth." I confess the Church does express a charitable "*hope*" respecting each person over whom the Burial Service is read; but then it is nothing more than a "*hope*," there is nothing of certainty about it. Such "*hope*," on the part of the Church, it is much to be feared, is too frequently misplaced. But is it not infinitely better to err on the side of charity, than that of severity and rash judgment? Without the gift of "discerning spirits," where could the line of distinction be drawn? It may be said, that the Church ought to express no hope respecting common swearers and drunkards. But, then, how could she act with regard to others equally as wicked, but not as notoriously so? What is to be done with the decent formalist, the close hypocrite, and the flaming professor, who may be at the same time a liar and slanderer; a case by no means uncommon? Dissenters, rather than find fault with the Church, ought in the plenitude of their charity, as they say they are "not of this world," to furnish the Church with a key or touchstone from "*the other world*," by which she may distinguish a varnished hypocrite from a true Christian. Being in possession of such means of detection, she might then be able to judge, and satisfy their "*tender consciences*." Or do they fear, that if once in possession of such a criterion, we should, by way of experiment or curiosity, be able to unmask some of their own dear brethren? Methinks, after taking a skin or two off Mr. S., and many others of a similar stamp, we should discover a strange compound of crafty, ambitious, political, and other rubbish, scarcely capable of analyzation.*

* It may not be irrelevant, while thus touching upon the Funeral Service to notice a curious instance of its effect. The story is related by Bishop

Besides, were the Church to act in the same respect towards Dissenters, as they wish her to act towards her own Members, she would fall under no small degree of their hatred and clamour. Dissenters, in dissenting and separating from the Church, commit the heinous sin of schism, which is, in my opinion, a greater sin than the sin of drunkenness; and therefore a great deal more frequently spoken against in the Word of God. Drunkenness is confessed by all to be a great evil, not so with regard to schism; many who would justly abhor the idea of committing the former, are by no means careful as to committing the latter. The sin of schism is so common in these latter days of the Church, that it is now scarcely thought to be a sin. This, however, neither justifies its commission, nor mitigates the punishment due to it; for notwithstanding its frequent recurrence, it is equally as heinous in

Sprat, in a visitation sermon, as having happened within the compass of his own knowledge.—“It was immediately after the happy restoration of Charles II., when together with the rights of the Crown, and the English liberties, the Church and the Liturgy were also newly restored, that a noted ringleader of schism in the former times was to be buried in one of the principal Churches in London. The Minister of the parish, being a wise and regular conformist, (and he was afterwards an eminent Bishop in our Church,) well knew how averse the friends and relations of the deceased had always been to the Common Prayer; which, by hearing it so often called a low rudiment, a beggarly element, and a carnal ordinance, they were brought to condemn to that degree, that they shunned all occasions of being acquainted with it. Wherefore, in order to the interment of their friend in some sort to their satisfaction, yet so as not to betray his own trust, he used this honest method to undeceive them. Before the day appointed for the funeral, he was at the pains to learn the whole office of burial by heart. And then the time being come, there being a great concourse of men of the same fanatical principles, when the company heard all delivered by him without a book, with a free readiness and profound gravity, and unaffected composure of voice, looks and gestures, and a very powerful emphasis in every part, (as indeed his talent was excellent that way,) they were strangely surprised and affected, professing they had never heard a more suitable exhortation, or a more edifying exercise, even from the very best and most precious men of their own persuasion. But they were afterwards much more surprised and confounded, when the same person who had officiated, assured the principal men among them, that not one period of all that he had spoken was his own, and convinced them by ocular demonstration, how all was taken, word for word, out of the very office ordained for that purpose in the poor contemptible Book of Common Prayer. Whence he most reasonably inferred, how much their ill-grounded prejudice and mistaken zeal had deluded them, that they should admire the same discourse when they thought it an unprepared, unpremeditated rapture, which they would have abominated, had they known it to be only a form prescribed by authority.”—Quarterly Review, No. 63, p. 39.

the sight of God as it ever was, and equally as dangerous to the souls of men. It is nothing less than a direct and open violation of those numerous commands which God has given in his Word for the preservation of unity, peace, and concord. I look upon schism, in fact, as tantamount to a renunciation of Christianity. What is it but a renouncing of the Church of Christ—a renouncing of her Ministers, and through them a renouncing of Christ himself? Do not schismatics, in forsaking the Church of God, and thus abandoning that machine which God has placed upon earth for the accomplishment of his great work of redemption in the salvation of men, and inventing new schemes of salvation for themselves, prefer their own wisdom, and their own ways, to the wisdom and ways of God? And as schismatics forsake the Church, and cut themselves off from her, they ought to be the very first persons over whom the Church should refuse her Burial Service to be read. If schismatics die with the sin of schism unrepented of, I see not how the Church can consistently consider them as brethren, or bury them as such. Neither can I see how Dissenters can consistently claim to be buried by the Church, as they frequently do, when they do not consider Churchmen as their brethren. The fact is, when speaking of themselves generally, and against the Church, Dissenters consider themselves as alone “the good, the pious, the holy”—“regenerated characters”—“the people of God”—“the saints;” and the Church may, therefore, very safely in their estimation express a “hope,” and even a “*sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life*” of every one of them. But as they charitably consider all others as “unregenerated characters”—“men of the world”—“unbelievers,” and as being “ignorant of the Gospel,” no “hope” whatever is to be expressed with regard to them. It may be said, that Dissenters do acknowledge that there are many pious and good men in the Church. I am aware that they do this; but allow me to say, that it is only to

Churchmen, or when shame prevents them from saying all they think, for on other occasions and privately amongst themselves, I have repeatedly heard such remarks as these, on the name of one of those of the Clergy, of whom they think the best, being introduced; "Yes, he is a very nice man, and a very well-meaning man, he seems to aim at preaching the truth, but he is groping in the dark, it would be a good thing if the Lord would open his eyes to see the truth clearly, he would then soon come out of the Church, and unite himself to the Lord's people, &c." I know that some few Dissenters entertain sentiments more expanded and generous; but such are the general views of that bigoted self-righteous faction. This, indeed, some of their more recent proceedings have more publicly manifested.

It will not appear so surprising, that Dissenters should consider all Churchmen as "men of the world," in other words, as "unbelievers," or as no Christians, when we reflect that they do not allow even those of their own Congregations, who are not Members of their Churches, to be Christians. Mr. James says, very deliberately and distinctly, "Yes, I do consider what is usually termed the Congregation, as '*the world*,' in distinction from the Church. They are those as the Apostle speaks of, as '*without*.' To consider them, and treat them as otherwise, is viewing them in an erroneous light."* This will render it a matter of no surprise at all, that Dissenters should at once unchristianize all Churchmen; and will afford sufficient elucidation, as to the nature of that spirit which dictates their objections to the Burial Service.

But are their "tender consciences" sufficiently glutted with consigning over to the regions of darkness all Churchmen, with all of their own Congregations, who are not Members; or in other words all the world, except those who are Members of their own little spiritual Clubs? Oh! no; for there are many,

* James, p. 219.

even of the Members of these Churches of Saints—these canonized juntos—of whom it is ‘*whispered*’ by the rest, that they are only professors; that they have not the “root of the matter” within them; that they are not real Christians. The Church of which I was a member, contained nearly two hundred Members, and was, therefore, considered a large Church; and amongst them, there were many who were said by others to be destitute of vital godliness. And sometimes even the Ministers themselves indulge in these uncharitable “whisperings” and “backbitings.” The last Dissenting funeral which I attended, was that of a lady, whose husband was a Deacon, and who had herself been a Member of the Dissenting Church several years. And her Minister and his wife told me themselves, a little short of a year before she died, that they believed she was a complete hypocrite; their words, as near as I can recollect were, “that she was a deceiver, deceiving herself and the Church of which she was a Member;” and they mentioned to me a book, some kind of a religious novel, in which they said her character was perfectly delineated. Well, and did the Minister intimate any thing of this kind in the funeral oration of which he delivered himself at the grave side? and did he caution the bystanders to beware of following the deceased in her ways of hypocrisy and deceit? O, nothing of the sort, that would never have done; for her family and connexions occupied several pews in the Meeting-house, and he knew that had he said any thing of the kind, he might have taken the pews to himself, and have made up his salary as he best could; he, therefore, sent her to heaven, hypocrite as he said she was, and preached a funeral sermon for her, in which he said, that she had been in the road to heaven for *five years* previously to her death.

But, moreover, although Dissenters, with Mr. James as above quoted, consider those who attend their Meeting-houses, but who are not Members of their Churches, only as men “of the world,” and as “without” the pale

of Christianity, do they always act consistently with such charitable views? O certainly not, it would be very strange if they did. I have myself heard funeral orations delivered over some, who have attended the Meeting-houses, but who have not been Members of the Churches, and funeral sermons preached for them, in which the Ministers have stated it as their belief, that the deceased were gone to heaven. Yes, the very persons who, Dissenting Teachers at one time tell us, are only "men of the world," and "without" that is without the pale of Christianity, are, these very same consistent Teachers at another time tell us, very good and very pious and holy Christians. Now, wherefore this duplicity—this spiritual legerdemain—this deceit in dealing with immortal souls? Why—money, money, simply to get money. When a person who has been a regular hearer of a Dissenting Teacher, and who desired to be buried in the Meeting-house yard, dies, who is to perform the last offices but the Teacher himself? Were he to refuse, he knows the relatives and friends of the deceased would be at once offended, and would have nothing more to do with him. Were he to state what he believes, that the deceased was only a "man of the world," an "unbeliever," and that he had consequently no hopes of him, he knows well what the result would be. Were he to speak neither one way nor the other, he knows they would not be satisfied, and that his pocket would consequently suffer. There is, therefore, no alternative left for him, but to *belie his conscience and save his pocket*, which is regularly done. With what conscience, therefore, and with what consistency, these men can find fault with a Clergyman for reading the burial service over those whom he buries, I cannot imagine: for let them be what they may, they cannot be more than "men of the world," or "unbelievers." I, therefore, freely leave the business for these *pious and consistent men*—these men of "tender consciences," to reconcile. One thing, however, is very obvious, that if a person attends

a Dissenting Meeting-house, hires a pew, and pays the rent, and subscribes pretty freely to any scheme which has for its object the putting money into the pocket of the Teacher, in spite of all professions, consistency, and conscience, the pious Teacher will send him to heaven die when he may, and say a rare long Dissenting mass, that is, preach a rare long funeral sermon for him into the bargain. Professions here, or professions there—consistency here, or consistency there—“tender consciences” here, or “tender consciences” there,—money, money, money is the object; to get money they break their professions—abandon consistency, violate their consciences, and make heaven itself an object of traffic.

In short, whatever is done by these people, be it what it may, is all perfectly right; and whatever is not coined in their mint, is as much the reverse. It is entirely in vain to endeavour to satisfy them. “Pure attachment to Dissenting principles requires to be kept up;” in order, therefore, to do this, “keen *hatred* and *round abuse* of the Church” are resorted to, and these must fix upon something or other; were the Church perfection itself, faults must be found in it, or Dissent would fall; and were the Burial Service altered to day, other objections equally as potent would be raised to-morrow. Nothing will ever satisfy the “tender consciences” of this “sect of determined dissatisfactionists” but to destroy the Church, to abolish monarchy, and to allow them once again to ride roughshod over the land. But to prevent as much as I am able such dire calamities from ever again overspreading the country,

I am, Sir,

Most willingly,

Your obedient Servant,

L. S. E.

LETTER XI.

ON THE ALLIANCE OF CHURCH AND STATE.

SIR,

THIS Letter will contain a few remarks in reference to Church Establishments, but more particularly with regard to the National Established Church within this country. I have heard a great many Dissenters argue upon the subject, but I never yet met with one who could tell me, in clear and intelligible language, what he meant by the Union of Church and State; and your friend, Mr. Scales, takes it for granted, that every body understands the subject, and has, therefore, given no definition of it. "By the Church of England," says the great and good Bishop Stillingfleet, "I mean that society of Christian people, which in this nation are united under the same profession of faith, the same laws of Government, and rules of Divine Worship;" and this he shews is a consistent notion of our Established National Church, which is a Society of men united together for their "order and government, according to the rules of the Christian Religion;" he adds that "he could not see," nor can any one else, without a pair of Dissenting spectacles, "why a National Society agreeing together in the same faith and under the same government and discipline, may not be as truly and properly a Church as any particular Congregation;" for "the narrowness, or largeness of extent,

doth not alter the nature of the thing." I confess that the phrase "Alliance," or "Union of Church and State," conveys to me no definite or intelligible idea at all. And I think it more than probable, that it conveys different ideas to different people, but confused ones to all.

It appears evident, that the Church and State are identically the same, just as a Christian and Citizen; for, as a Christian and Citizen are the self-same man, so the Church of England and the State of England are, or consist of, the self-same people. "When we oppose, therefore, the Church and Commonwealth in Christian Society, we mean by the Commonwealth, that Society with relation to all the public affairs thereof; *only* the matter of true religion excepted; by the Church, (we mean) the same Society, with only reference unto the matter of true religion without any affairs besides."* That form of Christianity, developed and contained in the Homilies, Articles, and Liturgy of the Church of England, is the religion of the people of England. The Bishops and Clergy, having drawn up the Articles of Faith, prescribed the forms of religious worship, and framed Canons for the regulation of the Church, proposed them to the King and to the people for their acceptance, sanction, and adoption. The King and the people having accepted and examined them, consented to them, sanctioned them, and adopted them as their own, believing them to be, as they certainly are, in strict accordance with the Scriptures of Truth. I do not mean to say, that the Bishops and Clergy proposed them to each and to every individual person in the Kingdom, that was alike impossible and unnecessary. They laid them before the representatives of the people in Parliament assembled, before those to whom the body of the people had delegated all their powers, and in whom their will and authority were fully concentrated. Their action, there-

fore, of sanctioning and adopting them, was the action of the people, or the whole body of the Commonwealth or Church of England. "So that our laws made concerning religion, do take originally their essence from the power of the whole realm and Church of England, than which nothing can be more consonant unto the law of nature and the will of our Lord Jesus Christ."* The people of this country are just as much Members of the Church of England, as they are of the State or Commonwealth of England. They are a Society of people united together for their mutual common benefit. They have, and ever had, an undoubted right to make just what laws and regulations for their own mutual government and advantage they please, as well in reference to religion as to any thing else. They have an equal right to expect, and to demand from every man, claiming fellowship with them, an entire, and unreserved agreement and submission to each, and to every one of their laws. And they have a just right to withhold from all those who will not agree and submit to their laws, as well in a religious as any other point of view, all the advantages, privileges, and benefits, which belong to them as a Society.

Indeed, Dissenters, whether of a religious or political complexion, cannot *reasonably* expect to enjoy the immunities and privileges of a Society, to which they, by their very Dissent, avow that they do not belong. And should the Society, community, or state, relax their laws, so as upon certain conditions to permit Dissenters even to dwell amongst them, it is a boon and an indulgence to which they have no manner of right, and for which they ought, therefore, to be exceedingly thankful. I know Dissenters say to the State, "your religion is wrong; and therefore, our consciences being very *weak* and *tender* we cannot agree with you, we should consider our souls endangered by it." To this the State ought, of course, to answer, "As to our reli-

gious faith being wrong, *we* are to be the judges of that and not you; and with respect to your consciences, they may be tender for ought we know, but we cannot tell whether they are or not, the Scriptures afford us no rule by which we can ascertain the fact; it may be, therefore, as it most likely is, all mere pretence:—for they seem quite strong enough to condemn us, and all those, our great and pious Divines and Fathers, who have gone before us, and whom we cannot but consider as much wiser and better than you. Besides, you think that no persons have consciences but yourselves: we have consciences as well as you, and we shall certainly not wound our own consciences, in the vain attempt to satisfy yours. We shall certainly prefer the good of the whole community, to that of a few interested, designing men; and we cannot forget, that your weak consciences were once strong enough, and sufficiently hardened, to murder one of our Kings and some of our Clergy, and to harass and persecute all the rest; and we know that you hate Monarchy now, just as much as ever you did. And as to your souls being endangered by agreement to our laws, that is your concern and not ours; we have souls as well as you, and they are just as valuable to us as yours are to you. All the difference is, we make less talk about it. We do not compel you to embrace our faith, we only withhold from you advantages and privileges which belong to us as a community, and to which you, not being Members of our Society, have no right or claim to, whatever. There are in the world numerous states or communities, of different degrees and shades of difference, both in a religious and a political point of view, surely amongst so many there is one with which you can agree; and, therefore, as you cannot agree with us, you had better go and become Members of some community with which you can agree, you will then enjoy all the benefits and privileges which belong to such community or state. But if you prefer staying with us, you are welcome to do so upon acceding to a few requisite con-

ditions, in themselves, exceedingly trifling. We will allow you to worship God just as you please, and even protect you in it; and instead of your unmerited and slanderous reproaches, we think ourselves fully entitled to your gratitude and respect, which we should consider far better proofs of the boasted superiority of your religious creed, than any others which you can offer."

All this is perfectly just and equitable, and what cannot be reasonably objected to. But you will, of course, oppose it with all the usual cant and jargon about "liberty of conscience," "the natural rights of man," and so on. One thing, however, is very evident, that no man has a natural right to any thing which belongs to another man or body of men. And as Dissenters you can have neither natural nor acquired rights, to any thing that belongs either to the Church, or Commonwealth of England. And with respect to liberty of conscience, you have just as much allowed you, as you allow others. Will you allow a Churchman to enjoy any benefits which belong to you as Dissenters? Certainly you will not, except he subscribe to the dogmas of your sect, and consent to have his conscience bound in just what fetters you may please to impose. Where, then, is your conscience, or even common decency, in claiming what is not your own, and clamouring so much about liberty of conscience, as though you were neither allowed to worship God nor do any thing else as you please? Surely the Church of England is to be allowed the advantages of a common club, or of Dissenters themselves, in demanding from every one assent to her Rules and Articles previously to their enjoying her privileges.* You are very fond of using

* What in all the world, can possibly be more foolishly inconsistent, than all the recent noise and turbulence of the Dissenters to obtain admission into the Universities? These pious people, in the plenitude of their slander, have always been representing the Universities as places of the most abominable wickedness and corruption—and as the very sinks of iniquity; and, yet, into these very same Universities, wicked and corrupt as they pretend to believe them, are they now piously clamouring to send their own sons. How truly disgusting and contemptible does such conduct appear to the mind of every upright and honest man! For if they do

very fine and very fair sounding words of liberty, which are very pleasing and captivating to the ears of silly, unthinking people; but when properly explained, what do they all amount to? Why simply this, and nothing more, that you will give others full liberty to think exactly as you think, and to act exactly as you act, but no more—which is in reality, just no liberty at all.

One entirely ignorant of the fact, would naturally imagine, from the way in which Dissenters argue in reference to the union of Church and State, that there existed in this kingdom, two sets of persons, totally distinct from each other,—the one purely religious, without a particle of any thing civil about them, and the other purely civil, without a particle of any thing religious about them. And that these two, known by the names of Church and State, had united together, or formed an “unholy alliance” for the express purpose of domineering over, and oppressing all beside themselves, but more especially the poor Dissenters. Your friend, Mr. Scales, labouring under the same nonsensical impressions, speaks of “Religious Establishments” “prescribing the faith and worship of a nation.”* As though in reference to this country, the “Religious Establishment” were something quite distinct from the nation—as though, forsooth, it were a club of tyrants who had taken up their residence in a cloud a little above the nation, whence they are continually showering down their Creeds and Liturgies upon the people, compelling them to believe and use them upon pain, I suppose, of a shower of red-hot stones, or some other such mischief. But, instead of the “Religious Establishment prescribing the faith and worship of the nation,” the fact is, it was the *nation* itself which has determined the faith and worship of its Religious Establishment, which it wisely upholds and supports

really believe the Universities to be as corrupt as they say they are, is it to be supposed, that they, so pious as they profess to be, would ever think of sending their own sons to them?

* Scales p. 201.

for its own spiritual benefit. For as before observed, the faith and form of worship of the Establishment were drawn up by the Clergy, who were *a part of the nation* or commonwealth, and sanctioned and adopted by the whole body of the people of England through the medium of those whom they had themselves voluntarily chosen and appointed, and to whom they had entrusted all their power and authority for that very purpose. And before the people adopted and sanctioned the faith and form of worship of their present Religious Establishment, that Establishment did not exist: for the very act of their sanctioning it, *constituted* it the Establishment. To talk, therefore, of the "Religious Establishment" prescribing the faith and worship of the nation, is ridiculously absurd—it is ascribing action to a thing before it was in existence. But I need give myself but little trouble in exposing Mr. Scales's absurdities, for he takes very good care to do that himself, by his repeated self-contradictions. In page 201 he says, that the "Religious Establishment prescribes the faith and worship of the nation." This he contradicts in page 231, by saying that it is done by the King *alone, independently of the Clergy, "to the exclusion of even the Primate himself."* But in page 182, he contradicts both these statements by saying, that it is done by "the King *and* the Clergy" together. But, alas! alas! for poor Mr. Scales, in the very next page, he totally destroys all these three positions by asserting that it is done by *the Parliament*; and he affects to be a little merry, with a laboured imaginary description of their proceedings in passing a bill for the purpose, which is, however, purely the creature of his own brains. So that, altogether, he has made no less than four different statements, all contradicting one another, and every one of them palpably false. Such a writer is a very fit advocate for the unscriptural vagaries of Dissent; for he really seems, poor man, to be determined literally to "prove *all* things," taking care never to "hold fast that which is good." In an age when

the "march of intellect" is said to be taking such rapid strides, one would hardly expect to find a man writing such glaring absurdities and palpable contradictions, as those which are so abundant in "Principles of Dissent;" to say nothing of the false insinuations and malignant slanders against the Church. In fact, those not acquainted with the uncharitable, bigoted, and condemning spirit with which rigid Dissenters are possessed, will scarcely be able to account for their pouring such volleys of slanderous abuse upon the Church and her "unholy," "Anti-Christian," "adulterous" union with the State, as it is termed. They will scarcely believe that the very persons who prate and cant so much about "liberal opinions, and charitable sentiments," consider the government of the country—the King, Lords, and Commons, and in fact, all who are not of their own brotherhood, and who have not bowed the knee to the idol of Dissent, as merely nominal Christians, or in the cant of Dissent "of the world," that is, in reality, "without" the pale of Christianity. But should the King and his Government, or any other opulent and respectable Churchmen, ever become so utterly destitute of regard for the Scriptures of Truth as to patronize "The Dissenting Interest," or "The Cause," they would immediately be looked upon in a different light, they would be canonized, like the infamous Cromwell, the Patron Saint of Independence; and their piety, virtues, and excellencies, whether real or pretended, would be trumpeted forth throughout the country. The King, and those "that are in authority," would then be fervently prayed for, in every Dissenting Meeting-house in the land. The Bible would be ransacked from one end to the other, for texts inferring loyalty to the King, and subjection to the powers that be, a subject upon which I never heard a sermon preached by a Dissenter in all my life. What is now so abominably wicked in the Church, would be most holy and righteous in Dissent. And though it be so heinously wicked, as it is hypocritically

pretended, for the State to patronize and support such a wicked system as the Church, yet to patronize, encourage, and in any way to support "the good Cause" of Dissent, would be, if not angelic, esteemed truly saint-like. The union of Dissent with the State, would be a god-like circumstance, and would very soon be shewn to be Scriptural. The examples of Josiah, Hezekiah, and other good Kings mentioned in the Word of God, together with numerous of their transactions, and those of others, would be placed in a most admirable light, and held up to Christian Kings, for their exact and undeviating imitation. The King, and those "that are in authority," would be forcibly exhorted, that "*whatsoever*" they do, whether in public life or private, "to do *all* to the glory of God."*

I know not in truth of what use a man's religion is, if it does not influence every action of his life, whether of a public or a private nature—the Word of God makes no exceptions in favour of public actions. And the religion of that man, who does not employ every talent which God has given him, and every opportunity afforded him by the station of life in which Providence has placed him, to forward the interests of true religion, and to promote the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, may very justly be questioned. Every man possesses a religion of some kind or other; and in proportion to his zeal for that religion, of whatever kind it may happen to be, will be the exertion of his influence in favour of it. Neglect or indifference is so culpable, that no man would ever attempt to justify it. And as it is with individuals, so it is with nations; no kingdom exists now, or ever has existed, without an Established Religion of some kind or other. This has ever been the case, hitherto, with respect to the numerous Heathen nations. And with regard to the people of God, Milner says, "It is certain that from the earliest ages, and under the Patriarchal Government, when holy men were favoured with divine revelations, Governors taught

the true religion, and did not permit their subjects to propagate atheism, idolatry, or false religion. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob governed their families in this manner; so did Noah before them. As families grew into nations, the same practical ideas prevailed. At length, when it pleased God to select one nation for his service, the same sentiments respecting Church Establishments continued, whether Kings, Judges, or Priests were in possession of the executive power."

Religion is, and ought most certainly to be, a matter of the very first consideration to every State. Hence God himself established, in the strictest sense of the term, a National Religion amongst his ancient people the Jews, and absolutely *bound* their Kings and Governors to attend to the religious advantages of their subjects. He made Religion "part and parcel of the law" of the Jews—he so firmly established it amongst them, that it was ever synonymous with their political existence. And as such a plan was adopted by God himself, we are sure it was far superior to any other that could possibly have been devised, and, therefore, decidedly the best calculated to answer the end he had in view—the spiritual welfare of that nation. To hint otherwise is an impeachment of Infinite Wisdom—it is treason against the Most High. And as a National Religious Establishment was best calculated to promote the spiritual welfare of the Jewish nation, why should it not be the same to a Christian nation? If the Jewish Kings were bound to attend to the religious welfare of their subjects, what is the reason that a Christian King is not bound to do the same?—as God himself set a National Religious Establishment on foot, how can such an institution *in itself* be sinful? To the argument in favour of a National Religious Establishment, drawn from that of the Jews, no solid answer ever has been, or ever can be given. All the writers I have read, leave it entirely untouched, and their wretchedly miserable trifling serves only to confirm one more fully in the idea of its being invincible. Mr.

Scales, unable to answer it, enveloped it in a mist, and endeavoured, with a good deal of puff and bluster, to puff the whole away together ; but he has totally failed in the attempt—he has merely blown away the mist—the argument remains as firm as ever, with an additional proof of its stability and strength. For the evident purpose of evading it, Mr. James and Mr. Scales both contend, that unless “ we are prepared to adopt *all* that was appointed and approved under the Jewish Dispensation,” we have no right to adopt anything. With equal propriety might they argue, that unless we are prepared to adopt *all* the proceedings under the Christian Dispensation, including the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles, we have no right to adopt any ; and where, then, would Christianity be ? This sufficiently exposes the absurdity of such reasoning. But they contend again, that as the Jewish Dispensation was one of types and shadows, which were all done away by Christ, we are not to go to it for a precedent for our National Religious Establishment. We admit at once that the types and shadows were abolished by Christ ; but then the National Religious Establishment of the Jews was neither *a type nor a shadow*, except of Christian National Religious Establishments, and that I fear you will not readily admit. And, therefore, until it can be proved that the Jewish National Religious Establishment was a type of something of which Christ was an Antitype, we shall remain in quite possession of our argument drawn from it, in spite of all your efforts to the contrary.

Again, Mr. Scales asks, “ is every thing now lawful to Christian Princes and people, which the Princes and people of Israel acted under the special warrant of a Divine command.”* I answer, no ; and Mr. Scales knows well enough that nobody says it is. But he finds it far more easy to create an objection, which he knows he can answer, than to overturn the argument

* Scales, p. 153.

of his opponents. Instead of fairly combatting the naked argument, he mixes it up with "*every thing*" of the Jewish Dispensation, and brushes the whole away together by saying, that as "we are not prepared to adopt the whole" we shall adopt nothing. But after all, the Kings of Israel, in all the proceedings they adopted for the Spiritual good of their people, did *not* always act "under the special warrant of a Divine command," they did many things without any special command at all. We read, that good King "Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the Children of Israel, and *made* all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers,"* "because he *made* them to serve the Lord their God," and that too, without any special command from God. We find, also, that Jehoshaphat shortly after he ascended the throne of Judah, "sent to his Princes to teach in the cities of Judah, and with them Levites and Priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."† Mr. Scales says that, before we follow the Princes and people of Israel in regard to their providing for the religious instruction of the nation, "we must have a warrant from God himself, as direct and explicit" as they had. Now, the King of England has "a warrant from God" for distributing religious teachers throughout the land, and thus providing for the religious instruction of his people, just as "direct and explicit" as Jehoshaphat, King of Judah had, for sending religious Teachers throughout *his* Kingdom, and thus providing for the religious instruction of *his* people. And, therefore, according to Mr. Scales's own showing, the King of England, as he is acting as much "under the special warrant of a Divine command" as was Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, does perfectly right in

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.

† 2 Chron. xvii. 7, 9.

upholding an Establishment for the religious instruction of his people. Jehoshaphat had no express command at all for what he did, and yet so far is he from being blamed, that the next verse to what is quoted above, shows that his conduct met with the approbation of the Lord his God. Hezekiah acted in a similar manner, without any "special warrant of a Divine command," and yet his conduct was also approved by the Lord.

The last shift of Mr. Scales, in order to get rid of the stubborn and irrefragable argument drawn from the Union of the Church and State under the Jewish Dispensation, is to assert that *that* dispensation was peculiar, and, therefore, cannot be taken as a precedent. He says—"The truth is, the whole system was *peculiar*, instituted for a special purpose, which has already been answered."* What the "special purpose" was, for which the system was instituted, Mr. Scales, for very obvious reasons, has not told us. It was evidently for the religious instruction of the people, and their consequent spiritual welfare; and that a National Religious Establishment was best calculated to answer such a heavenly "special purpose" is put beyond doubt, by its having been contrived and set on foot by God himself. That a scheme better calculated to answer such a purpose could be contrived by all the Dissenters put together, I dare not imagine: whatever they may think of their own boasted wisdom, I feel inclined to prefer the wisdom of God; to do otherwise I should consider most daringly presumptuous and profane. But Mr. Scales, in the quotation just given, instead of confining himself to the argument deduced from the Church Establishment of the Jews, confounds it as usual with their "whole system," and hopes, by burying it amongst the ceremonies, types, and shadows of that Dispensation, to get rid of the whole together. But though the ceremonies, types, and shadows of that

* Scales, p. 159.

system were certainly "peculiar," it remains yet to be shewn what there is in the Jewish National Religious Establishment, abstractly considered, either ceremonial, typical, or peculiar. And till that be done nothing is done, and we are left to triumph in our opinions. But although Mr. Scales will not allow us to appeal to the Jewish Church Establishment as a precedent which had nothing in it either typical, ceremonial, or peculiar, yet as a precedent for infant baptism he triumphantly appeals to circumcision, which was certainly *ceremonial, typical, and peculiar* to the Mosaic Dispensation, and as certainly abolished by Christ, when he "broke down the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles. "How inconsistent is error—how dim-sighted is prejudice!!!"

Cleared of every thing irrelevant, the question lies in a nut-shell, and is simply this. Is a National Religious Establishment *in and of itself*, absolutely and abstractedly considered, sinful? A decisive answer to this question settles the point for ever. For my own part, I cannot for a moment hesitate to affirm that it is not sinful, but the reverse; and as a proof in point, I confidently appeal to the National Church of the Jews established by God himself, fully convinced that he would not—that he could not—do a thing *in itself* sinful. And I do not see how the opponents of Established Churches can affirm it to be sinful, without condemning the Great God himself. This I must leave to their "tender consciences," the very thought is enough. Moreover, seeing that human Legislators are so wary in doing any thing which may furnish a dangerous precedent to after times, I cannot conceive that the Infinitely Wise God, knowing, as he did, that the National Church of the Jews would be appealed to, as a precedent for establishing Christian National Churches, would ever have established it, had it been at all wrong, as a precedent. And had he intended that it should not be considered as a precedent to after ages, he would no doubt have given cautions to that effect; instead of that, not

a word is said against Established Churches in all the Word of God. He has given no caution against Established Churches whatever; but if they were wrong, he would have done so, as he has done against Dissent so repeatedly. Christian Kings and Governors are, therefore, fully justified by the conduct of God himself in promoting, and providing for, the religious instruction and spiritual welfare of all those over whom God has placed them; and in a more heavenly—more god-like work—they cannot possibly be engaged. And in spite of all the factious cavilling of *interested* and wicked men, they may rest assured, that whilst they take God for their great exemplar, and imitate his conduct, they are treading upon firm ground. They will never be wrong in attending to the exhortations of the great Apostle, “Be ye, therefore, followers or imitators of God.”*

I cannot avoid here giving a single specimen, from a multitude which might be produced, of the tremendously awful lengths to which the opponents of Established Churches run. I take it from Mr. Scales;† it consists of a quotation from Locke, with Mr. Scales’s remarks upon it. Locke says, “the Church itself is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the Commonwealth. The boundaries on both sides are fixed and immoveable. He jumbles heaven and earth together, the things most remote and opposite, who mixes these Societies, which are in their original, end, business, and every thing, perfectly distinct and infinitely different from each other.” In reference to these words, Mr. Scales remarks, “Yet this chaos of confusion and misrule is produced in what is called the Establishment of Religion; but which, were we to judge and decide according to its effects, would be much more appropriately styled its *overthrow and degradation*. The institutions are, indeed, so utterly unlike, so ill-adapted for combination, that they cannot be brought into this,

* Eph. v. 1.

† Scales, p. 166.

close affinity without injury to each other, by altering and spoiling their respective properties, and defeating to a considerable degree the very ends for which they were formed. THE PRINCIPLE ITSELF IS, THEREFORE, DECIDEDLY WRONG." In the first place, Locke, we find, says, in terms of manifest reprobation, that "he who mixes the Church and Commonwealth, jumbles heaven and earth together." Now it is agreed on all hands, that God in his wisdom did himself "mix the Church and Commonwealth" of the Jews together; and therefore, according to Locke, "he jumbled heaven and earth together," and like a foolish jumbler actually mixed together those very Societies, which, "according to the just and philosophical views of the enlightened and liberal-minded Locke," as Mr. Scales calls him, "are in their original, end, business, and every thing perfectly distinct and infinitely different from each other." Here we have expressly and directly Locke against the Most High God. Mr. Scales, however, is much more audacious: he says, that a "chaos of confusion and misrule is produced in what is called the Establishment of Religion; but which, were we to judge and decide according to its effects, would be much more appropriately styled its *overthrow and degradation*." Jehovah, therefore, in establishing Religion among the Jews, in the humble opinion of Mr. Scales, who, of course, has a "tender conscience," "produced a chaos of confusion and misrule," and did that "which would," in the very modest opinion of Mr. Scales, "be much more appropriately styled, the *overthrow and degradation* of Religion, than the establishment of it;" that is, if we "are to judge and decide according to its effects." The "effects" produced by the Jewish Church Establishment, I suppose Mr. Scales conceives to be, their various and frequent idolatries, their numerous captivities, the destruction of their first Temple, and afterwards their rejection of the Messiah—together with the destruction of the second Temple, the abolition of their whole economy, and their ultimate dispersion.

Why, really, an exposition of the Bible, ingeniously attributing all the numerous iniquities, idolatries, and abominations of the Jews, with all their consequent evils, to their "Religious Establishment," or religious "degradation," as Mr. Scales will have it, would be a most valuable acquisition to the library of a Dissenter.

Can we, however, imagine, that if the "Establishment of Religion" really be as Mr. Scales says it is, "its overthrow and degradation," the All-Wise God did not know this, when he himself Established Religion among the Jews, or that he could not foresee that the "effects" of the "Establishment of Religion" amongst the Jews would be "*its overthrow and degradation?*" I speak it with the utmost reverence, is the Almighty indebted to the wisdom of Mr. Scales, and such visionary and *interested* theorists, for his knowledge upon the subject? Or is he in common with them taught by *experience*? Does he by being thus enabled "to judge and decide according to its effects," come at the knowledge that "the Establishment of Religion" is in fact "*its overthrow and degradation?*" Has he discovered from *experience* that the Church and State, according to the wisdom of Mr. Scales, "are, indeed, so utterly unlike, so ill adapted for combination, that they cannot be brought into this close affinity without injury to each other, and defeating to a considerable degree, the very ends for which they were formed?" And will Mr. Scales say, that this is the reason why God does not now allow of the Union of Church and State, or of an "Establishment of Religion?" Can we for a moment blasphemously imagine, the Infinitely Wise God to act in such a manner, and to be the author of such downright wickedness, as Mr. Scales seems obliged to represent him, in his attempts to bolster up his iniquitous system of Dissent? The "Establishment of Religion," however, was likely to be productive of evil, for Mr. Scales adds, "THE PRINCIPLE ITSELF IS DECIDEDLY WRONG!!" Now if, as Mr. Scales says, "*principles* are consistent, immu-

table, and *eternal*,"* that "*principle*" must have been as "decidedly wrong" when God saw fit to establish Religion among the Jews as it is at the present moment. Thus do puny mortals of the dust, swelling in all the pride of carnal reason, and "opposing and exalting themselves above all that is called God," arraign the All-Wise Creator of the ends of the earth at their petty bar, and accuse him of want of wisdom and foresight, and of doing that which produces the greatest wickedness, rather than forego the wicked and damnable errors upon which their own "*interest*" depends. It would assuredly be at least more candid, and much less difficult, to reject the authority of the whole of the Old Testament entirely, and thus at once get rid of arguments which you will otherwise ever find insuperable. One of your Dissenting Brethren has, I understand, altogether rejected one of the Books of the Old Testament; and I dare say, that by the same rule, you might very easily reject all the rest; for while they are acknowledged as the Word of God, the arguments with which they abound, and with which they consequently supply us in favour of a National Religious Establishment, will ever remain invincible.

Finding that the Old Testament furnishes us with abundant and irrefragable proofs in favour of National Religious Establishments, you anxiously turn your backs upon it, and take us to the New Testament, and ask us with an air of affected triumph, where we there find any mention made of a National Establishment of Christianity, or of its being in any way encouraged and patronized by Kings and Governors, or where we there find them commanded to do so? Now against those who allege that there is no commandment in the New Testament authorising you to baptize infants, you agree that as it was so generally understood and practised among the Jews under the Old Testament Dispensation, no fresh commandment was at all neces-

sary. In the very same way I argue against you, that as Kings and Governors were imperatively commanded in the Old Testament to establish, encourage, and patronize religion, "no fresh commandment was at all necessary." You also argue, that if Christ had intended that infant baptism should not have been continued under the Christian Dispensation, he would have given a command to that effect; but as he has not done so, it is a duty still binding. In the very same way I argue, that if Christ had intended Kings and Rulers should not establish and patronize religion under the Christian Dispensation as they were commanded under the Jewish, he would have given a command to that effect; but as he has not done so, it is a duty still binding. And the Apostle tells us, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning."—The examples of the good Kings under the Jewish Dispensation, who exerted all their talents, property, and influence, in establishing and promoting the knowledge of true religion, are recorded for the instruction and direction of Christian Rulers in every succeeding age, and held up for their godly imitation.

That Christianity was neither nationally established, nor encouraged, or supported by Kings and Rulers in the Apostolic or primitive age of the Church, is certain; but to produce this as an argument against National Religious Establishments, is just as wise as to produce, as an argument against the Jewish National Establishment, that nothing of the kind existed in the good old days of Adam and Eve. Had any Rulers of the earth embraced Christianity in its earliest days, they would, no doubt, have felt it their duty, to have exerted all their influence and authority, in establishing and supporting it. But it did not seem good to God, that this should be the case; for this very good reason, because the Divine origin of Christianity would not then have been half so evident, the power by which it was established in the earth, would then have seemed to have been of men, and not of God. Whereas, the

very circumstance of its establishing itself in the world, and rising, as it did, to the very highest pitch of glory and splendour, in opposition to all the powers on earth, demonstrated and still demonstrates "that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of man." The purpose of God, in establishing Christianity having been fully accomplished, it pleased him to withdraw from the Church those miraculous powers which had so conspicuously strengthened and adorned her.

Shortly afterwards, he fulfilled to her his gracious promise—"Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their Queens thy nursing mothers."*—by raising up Constantine, and placing her under his support. Constantine raised her to the highest pinnacle of glory. In his days she shone forth as the sun in his strength. He abolished Paganism, and, considering it his duty as a Christian, established Christianity upon its ruins, as the Religion of the Roman Empire. This, however, has subjected him to no small share of reproach from modern Dissenters, who have, in the usual plenitude of their liberality and charity, even called in question the reality of his Christianity. Mr. Scales says, "Reasons of State, it is probable, weighed quite as much with him to embrace Christianity as the convictions of an enquiring mind."† Had he embraced the "principles of Dissent," which, however, were not then in existence, he would have been the most "enlightened," "liberal minded," and "pious" Emperor that ever swayed a sceptre; but he is now called an arbitrary despot, and accused of having "invaded the rights of the Church," and "usurped the dominion of Christ,"—of making his "own will the law of his conduct, and doing whatever seemed right in his own eyes."‡ A Mr. Jones, the author of a Dissenterised History of the Church, says, that "Constantine himself assumed the title of Bishop, and claimed the power of regulating the external affairs of the Church; and he and his suc-

* Isaiah xlix. 23.

† Scales, p. 152.

‡ Ibid.

cessors convened Councils, in which they presided and determined all matters of discipline."* That this extract is fraught with the most glaring, if not designed falsehood, this same truth-telling historian shall testify. In another place he says, that at the Council of Nice, the Emperor himself made a speech, and "concluded with expressing his earnest wish that *they* (the Bishops) would, as speedily as possible, remove every cause of Dissension, and lay the foundation of a lasting peace."† Now, if Constantine did claim the power of regulating the affairs of the Church, and of determining "*all matters of discipline*," where was the propriety of his earnestly wishing the *Bishops* to "remove every cause of Dissension"—why did he not do it himself? But one answer can be given—he claimed no such power as he is said to have done, and the assertion that he did, is a Dissenting falsehood, fabricated for the express purpose of calumniating Religious Establishments. Hear this Dissenting historian again—this very same Mr. Jones.—During the sitting of the Council, says he, "The Emperor bade the Bishops reduce all their complaints against each other into writing. And on a certain day which he had appointed to consider them, he said, as he threw all the billets *unopened* into the fire, *that it did not belong to him to decide the differences of Christian Bishops*."‡ Now, really where is either the truth, honesty, or shame of Messrs. Scales and Jones—where were their "tender consciences" forsooth, when they asserted—the one that "Constantine invaded the rights of the Church, and usurped the dominion of Christ—made his own will the law of his conduct, and did whatever seemed right in his own eyes,"—and the other that he "claimed the power of regulating the affairs of the Church, and determined all matters of discipline,"—since Mr. Jones himself confesses that the Emperor openly declared "*that it did not belong to him to decide the differences of Chris-*

* Jones. Vol. 1. p. 310.

† Ibid, p. 321.

‡ Ibid, p. 322.

tian Bishops," and earnestly wished them to decide them of themselves. So little, indeed, were the Bishops influenced by Constantine, that though, as Mr. Jones himself says, "he condescended to become a mediator between them, (Alexander and Arius,) *all his attempts proved fruitless.*"* Constantine in employing his time, talents, and influence in promoting the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom, did no more than what, as one entrusted with a high office by God, and as a Christian, he was bound to do. Had he continued an idolator, and a persecutor of the Christians, he would have escaped all the maledictions of modern Dissenters. I say modern Dissenters; for the more sober Dissenters of other days were favourable to a National Religious Establishment—they would have spurned the impious idea that Rulers have nothing to do with promoting the spiritual welfare of their people; the infernal notion is a legitimate child of Infidelity and the French Revolution, nursed and dandled by the politico-religious Dissenters of England, who have for their avowed object the destruction of the Established Church, full of hope that the Monarchy will fall with it, and that they may erect upon their ruins their ideal Republic. Oliver Cromwell, for overthrowing the Church, and establishing Dissent in the blood of her sons, is considered a Saint of the very first water; but Constantine, for abandoning Paganism, and establishing Christianity, is considered as no more than an hypocrite, embracing Christianity for "reasons of State," and accused of "converting the Kingdom of Christ into a kingdom of this world." Christ certainly foresaw that National Religious Establishments would exist, and were they really such abominable evils as Dissenters represent them, would the New Testament, seeing it denounces by name other evils of far less magnitude in the eyes of Dissenters, have remained, as it is, entirely silent upon the subject? Not a single

* Jones, p. 318.

passage exists in the Word of God which is in the slightest degree adverse to a National Religious Establishment, or an alliance of Church and State.

As to the words, "My kingdom is not of this world,"* which are ridiculously enough said by Beverley to be the seven golden candlesticks mentioned by St. John in the Revelation, they are not at all pertinent to the purpose. *Had Christ made use of them in opposition to the union of Church and State which then existed in Judea, there would have been some reason in using them in opposition to the union of Church and State in England.* This, however, he did not. Pilate fancied Christ was about to set up a temporal kingdom in opposition to that of Cæsar. To satisfy him upon the subject, Christ says, "my kingdom is not of this world." And were the Church of England about to set up a *temporal kingdom in opposition* to that of the reigning Monarch, the words might be applied to her with some degree of propriety; but in no other case, and under no other circumstances whatever, can they be applied to her with either sense or meaning. So far, indeed, is the Church from ever being accused of *opposition* to the State, that she is slandered for her *union with it*. But when Dissenters, under the garb of Religion, and by means of the flimsy pretences, of "religious liberty," and "liberty of conscience," are seeking their temporal aggrandizement, and aiming at the destruction of our national polity: *to them the words may be appropriately applied, and with tenfold emphasis.*

If the words "My kingdom is not of this world" properly mean, as you pretend they do, "That Kings are to have nothing to do with Religion—that Kings are not to nurse and nourish the Church of Christ;" they stand in evident and direct opposition to this prophesy and promise of God to his Church—"Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their Queens thy

* John, xviii. 36.

nursing mothers." But dare we imagine, Sir, that the Holy Blessed God has said in one place, that "Kings shall be nursing fathers to the Church," and in another place, that it is a great sin for them to have anything at all to do with it?—Has he thus contradicted himself? Such blasphemy may be very suitable to the opponents of Church Establishments, but every true Christian will shudder at it. Dissenters may link with Papists, Socinians, and Infidels, and rage and rave at their meetings for the avowed purpose of overthrowing the Church; but the Church will put her trust in her Blessed Lord and Master for the fulfilment of his gracious promise—she knows that his promises are all yea and Amen in Christ Jesus; and when she reflects that he, who can "dash his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel," has said that "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her," she may smile defiance at all the envious and malicious attempts of her enemies. The case is simply this—God has positively and expressly said, "Kings *shall* be thy nursing fathers, and their Queens thy nursing mothers." Dissenters, in direct opposition to him, positively and expressly declare, "that they shall not—that they have no right to interfere with the Church, and shall have nothing to do with it." Who, then, shall prevail? That is the important question.

Your friend, Mr. Scales, though he reiterates again and again that the Scriptures are his only rule of faith and practice, has produced, in the course of his long chapter against Ecclesiastical Establishments, which occupies above one-third of his book, only that one misunderstood and misapplied passage of Scripture,—“My Kingdom is not of this world,”* in proof of his point, which is sufficient of itself to show the pitiful weakness of his cause, and its utter destitution of Scrip-

* Of what Kingdom was Mr. Scales, when posting up and down the County of York on electioneering business? Of what Kingdom is Mr. Hamilton, of Leeds, when dining at political dinners, and sitting to hear songs, glees, catches, &c.?

tural proof. He knew that the text, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their Queens thy nursing mothers," was produced against him by his opponents, and why has he not taken it out of their hands, and reconciled it *intelligibly* with his own views?—he would thus have effected something to his purpose; but no, that remains yet to be done, and ever will. But I will give the opinion of a learned Dissenter upon the words, whom I have frequently heard Dissenters call "the Prince of Commentators."—He says, after quoting the words, "this is to be understood *literally* of the Kings and Queens of the earth, and is thought to have had its fulfilment, at least in part, in Cyrus, Ahasuerus, Esther, and others, but more so in Christian Kings and Queens—as *Constantine* and Helena, Theodosius and Placilla, and others, and will have a far greater accomplishment in the latter day glory."* Such an accomplishment, however, would terribly mortify *modern* Dissenters. Upon a parallel passage in Isaiah (lx. 60.) the same writer comments as follows:—"And their Kings shall minister under thee," "that is," says he, "the Kings of the Gentiles, as *Constantine*, and some other truly Christian Kings and Emperors have done, though their numbers have been very small *as yet*; but when this prophecy is fulfilled it will be a *general case*—Kings everywhere will be nursing fathers, and Queens nursing mothers to the Church—will serve the interest of it, and promote it to the uttermost of their power." Our modern "march of intellect" Dissenters will not thank the Doctor very cordially for such honesty I imagine. The Learned Doctor upon a part of the sixteenth verse of the same Chapter speaks quite as pointedly; the passage is this—"and thou (i. e. the Church) shall suck the breast of *Kings*," "who shall now," says the Doctor, "be converted in various places, come into the Church and be nursing fathers to it, help and assist the people of God with their riches,

* Vide Dr. Gill, in loco.

to carry on Divine Worship in an honourable manner, and to protect and defend them with their power."*

Nothing can surpass the clear and consistent exposition of this strong-minded man upon these passages. Though a Dissenter, he has expounded them honestly and fairly, and just as he would have done had he been a consistent Churchman. I have chosen to give a Dissenter's exposition of them, in preference to that of a Churchman, because, as the writer will not be accused of partiality, his opinion must be of tenfold greater weight.

Upon the Infidel principle, that Religion is to have nothing to do with politics, and that Kings ought not to attend to the best interests of their people—that they are to have nothing to do with Religion—how are Kings to be nursing fathers to the Church,—how is the prophecy to be fulfilled? How are Kings to manifest their Religion,—to shew that they have faith, if they are not to encourage, support, and minister of their wealth to the Church of Christ?† O, say you, we have hit upon a very happy expedient, the King must be of no particular creed, he must equally regard and patronize all sects and parties, whether Protestant or Papist—Independent or Quaker—Swedenborgian or Socinian—Methodist or Ranter, but be sincerely attached to none. But can the King conscientiously believe them all? For common sense tells us, that he must do that before he can conscientiously support them all. The very idea is disgusting. Every one, even the very meanest individual in the Kingdom, it

* Vide Gill in locis.

† Mr. Scales goes so far as to say (p. 78), that "Christianity gives no laws to Governments;" consequently Governments cannot be guilty of sin in whatever they do. Sin is the transgression of a law, but if they have no laws, they of course cannot break them; nor can they, therefore, be amenable to the God of Christianity. What is this but rank Infidelity?—Mr. Scales finishes a paragraph of fine declamatory nonsense with these lofty words: "Be wise, now, therefore, O ye Kings; be instructed ye Judges of the earth." That is, be wise, now, O ye Kings of the earth, and attend to the wisdom and admonitions, and pious exhortations, of me, Mr. Thomas Scales, politico-religious Teacher at Leeds,—and be ye instructed ye Judges of the earth by me, the same mighty and important personage!!

seems is to enjoy full liberty of conscience, and the privilege of choosing a religion for himself, and of *supporting* that religion as he pleases, but the King. Every one, forsooth, may possess a conscience scrupulously tender in regard to religion, except the King. He is neither to have a tender conscience, nor, in truth, any conscience at all; or, should he be so unfortunate as to have one, it must be of extent sufficient to allow him to swallow all the contradictory creeds of all sorts of schismatical and heretical sectaries, together with all the absurd nonsense, ridiculous fooleries, and wild reveries of every hot-headed and hair-brained fanatic. The very idea of reducing the King, or any other individual on earth, to such a despicable situation is only worthy of the diabolical source whence it arises, and comes with excellent grace from those who are continually bawling so much about "liberty of conscience." If the King be not to choose and patronize what religion he pleases, where is *his* liberty of conscience?

In the Report delivered at the Second Annual Meeting of their Society for overturning the Church, Dissenters say, that "The man who is on principle a Dissenter, and does not his best to make others so, is chargeable at the bar of the Heavenly King with misprision of treason." Now, in all conscience, if such be the imperative duty of every adherent of an unscriptural and unholy system, how much more so is it the duty of a Member of the Church of Christ? And, therefore, I contend, and you cannot consistently object to it, that "The King, who is on principle a Churchman, and does not his best to make others so, is chargeable at the bar of the Heavenly King with misprision of treason." In a letter addressed by a Board of Congregational Dissenting Teachers to all the Dissenters of the same cast in the Kingdom, as well as in all Dissenting Periodicals, Dissenters are earnestly exhorted to use their utmost endeavours "to make aggressive inroads into the empire of moral dark-

ness, and to induce the unenlightened and neglected of the population to enter the Sanctuary of God, that on a scale of more extended usefulness to the poor the Gospel may be preached." Now, Sir, if it be right for Dissenters "to make *aggressive* inroads into the empire of moral darkness, and to carry religious instruction within the reach of "the unenlightened and neglected of the population," why is it wrong for Churchmen to do the same?—how can it be wrong for the King, or the Rulers of the Nation, "to make *aggressive* inroads into the empire of moral darkness," and provide for the spiritual instruction of all the people over whom God has placed them? I contend, and none but an Infidel will attempt to deny it, that it is their imperative duty—a duty for the due discharge of which they are highly and awfully responsible—to employ all the talents and influence which God has given them, in aid of the accomplishment of such a grand and glorious object. And nothing is, or can be better adapted for it than a National Religious Establishment; for by it Churches are built, and Ministers provided for thousands, who would never otherwise have known anything of Christianity—many of them too poor, and all of them much too disinclined to provide any kind of religious instruction for themselves. And, on other occasions, Dissenters themselves assert the latter position as an unquestionable and an established truth, particularly when treating on the subjects of original sin, and the total depravity of human nature. A great part of their proceedings, also, and all their Missionary exertions of every description, are manifestly carried on upon the supposed falsehood of their "voluntary" notions. So glaringly, and so absurdly inconsistent, indeed, are the practices of these people with their avowed and boasted principles, that I am often surprised that they do not abandon their present system altogether, and adopt one that would have at least the *appearance* of being in some degree rational and consistent. It may, however, be

the case that the all-wise God permits those who hold dangerous errors, to fall into all sorts of inconsistencies and self-contradictions, that they may serve as beacons to all those real spiritual pilgrims who are travelling with their faces towards the Heavenly Zion.

Gladly rejoicing that I was ever made sufficiently acquainted with the unscriptural and erroneous nature of your system and sect, so as to leave them,

I remain, once more,

Sir,

Your's, &c.

L. S. E.

LETTER XII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SIR,

THE "voluntary system," or the notion that all people would provide religious instruction for themselves, were it not provided for them by a National Religious Establishment, or by some other means, is both unscriptural and absurd, and contradicted by the continual practice of Dissenters themselves. It pre-supposes that men would as naturally and as willingly provide themselves with spiritual as with bodily provision,—that they are by nature anxiously desirous of spiritual food in the shape of religious instruction; whereas the very reverse is a truth clearly revealed in the Word of God, believed and acted upon by Dissenters themselves, and proved by daily observation. But the notion is also absurd, for it pre-supposes that all people are not only willing, but also sufficiently acquainted with Christianity, to be able to choose a true Minister of the Gospel to teach them; whereas, the great majority of the people are so totally ignorant of the first principles of Christianity, that they would be as likely to choose a Teacher of heresy and schism as a Minister of the Gospel of Christ; and, indeed, in too many instances more so, as is evident from the circumstance, that through the deceit and allurements of the Devil, many even of those who have an opportu-

nity of being instructed by a Minister of Christ reject him, and having "itching ears," *voluntarily* choose for themselves Dissenting Teachers of every imaginable shade of heresy and schism.

I, at the present moment, recollect an instance which furnishes an invincible proof in favour of our National Establishment, and in opposition to that which is termed the "Voluntary Church System." It is that of a very extensive agricultural parish, having in it three Churches, but including no less than ten townships; and although some of the villages are at a considerable distance from any of the Churches, and every thing has been in other respects, which I forbear to mention, *most favourable* to the introduction of Dissent, and the operation of the voluntary principle, there is but one very small Dissenting Meeting-house in all the parish. This has been built nearly ten years; and though it cost but a mere trifle, not being so large as some of the cottages, it is yet *unpaid for*, and likely to remain so; and it is a well-known fact, that the village in which it stands is by far *the most wicked of any in the parish*. Now the Clergyman of one of the Churches, although not at all obliged to give the people more than one Service every Sunday, generally gives them an extra full service, which, as he has another Church partially to supply, is more frequently performed in the evening; and so far are the people from even *thanking* him for his gratuitous services, that, I have heard they have actually objected to the trifling expense of lighting the Church for the purpose. Would these people, then, it may be asked, provide religious instruction for themselves, upon the voluntary principle? They would certainly do nothing of the kind. It may be thought that they are too poor to bear the expense: this, however, instead of being against, would be a good argument in *favour* of the Established Church. But the very reverse of this is the case: for they are far wealthier than the inhabitants of any other township in the parish; indeed, I

think it may safely be affirmed, that they are worth as much as, if not more than, the inhabitants of all the other nine townships put together. There are, indeed, considering the population, few wealthier villages in the kingdom. This parish, therefore, affords a most triumphant proof in opposition to the "voluntary Church System," and, I regret to say, it is not a solitary instance of the kind; for there are many parishes in the same neighbourhood, and hundreds in the kingdom, similarly circumstanced.

It is also worthy of remark, that in a respectable village, about a mile and a half from the Church above alluded to, and just upon the borders of an adjoining parish, there is an Independent Meeting-house, which has been shut up for the last three or four years, merely because the people will not *voluntarily* support "the Cause": they will not *voluntarily* provide themselves with religious instruction. The voluntary system, therefore, in this instance, as well as in many other similar instances which might be mentioned, has proved a complete failure; and what renders it the more so is, that the Meeting-house has a small endowment annexed to it. Its last Minister having a glib tongue, and a good stock of cant, was considered by the poor ignorant people a very *pious* man; he, therefore, became pretty popular, and made out his "Call" pretty clearly to the people. He also became particularly intimate with one of his first-rate female saints—a woman with a family of children; but as he had himself a wife, with a large family, his visits were not suspected: the good people naturally thought that he visited her so frequently for the purpose of talking about the good things, and of resolving cases of conscience, and so on, as in days of yore. His poor wife, however, soon discovered that she could do nothing to satisfy his "*tender* conscience." So weak, indeed, was his conscience, that he could eat no bread but what this woman made. He, therefore, insisted that his wife should admit her into his house, to make

and bake his bread, and do other things for him; which, of course, was no very comfortable piece of business for his poor wife. The woman, however, soon began to *prophesy*—whether according to the “*voluntary system*” or not I shall not determine; but rumour, with her hundred tongues, agreed in one interpretation, that a young Dissenter would soon fulfil his mother’s *prophesyings*, and be chirping about his “*tender conscience*.” The adulterer and adulteress, shortly after this, received a “*unanimous call*” to leave the country, which they both “*accepted*”: they, therefore, got up early one morning, and started together. The Teacher, with his “*tender conscience*,” pious man! left his wife and family behind him; and the woman—or rather brute—locked her own children up in her house, alone, in bed, and left them behind her; and neither of them has ever since been once heard of. Such facts are truly deplorable. I would not urge them as arguments against Dissent. They make nothing for or against any system—they exhibit to us the weakness and depravity of our fallen nature. But surely they show the absurdity of those who talk of Dissent as “*already purified*.” And who, as though Dissenting Ministers were immaculate, dwell upon the immorality of Clergymen as affording a ground for secession from the Church.

But I must pass on to observe, that although the voluntary system is said to be so excellent, it really exists no where, but in the imagination of its deluded adherents; for they themselves directly contradict it in their continual practice. They find in spite of all their theorising, that God does not now work by miracles, not even for or by *them*, though they modestly tell us they are “*already purified*,” and the highly favoured people of God. God works by means, and this they acknowledge in reference to themselves, and, therefore, exhort their adherents to make use of all the means in their power; but in reference to the Church, it seems God does not work by means, and, there-

fore, Churchmen are cunningly told, that it is very wrong to make use of means to forward the interests of the Church. Mr. Scales kindly assures them, that in doing so "they betray a great want of confidence in the truth and divinity of the system they have espoused; if they believe it to be of God, they ought not to be afraid of trusting it to his Providence;" "the attempt," he says, "to force it forward and give it an artificial and premature spread and sway, will, in all probability, be found to counteract its tendency and influence, and to thwart its genuine interests. If it be a Divine Religion, it does not need the interposition of carnal and secular agency to ensure its success."* Now, really, to use the words of Mr. Scales's friend Locke, "there never was so much glib nonsense put together in well-sounding English." For it seems no means whatever are to be made use of for the purpose of upholding Christianity in the world: we are in the true Spirit of Antinomianism to sit perfectly still and trust to God to work miracles to uphold his cause. But the purport of all such stuff is evidently to sophisticate and be-fool folks, and make them believe that no Established Church is necessary to uphold Religion,—that Religion would stand of itself without any such means as Churchmen make use of to support it. And should Churchmen prove such good easy fools as to be gulled by such sophistry, whilst Dissenters circumvent them in every direction, and trip up their Establishment, it would have its desired effect, and Dissenters would justly laugh at the weakness and credulity of their victims. But how truly disgusting is such language, when we know that the very reverse of it is most strongly inculcated upon Dissenters, and that the most strenuous exertions are at the present moment, and have for some time past, been making both by the regular Dissenting periodicals, and by several pamphlets published expressly for the purpose, to excite and

* Scales, p. 211.

stir up Dissenters to employ their time, talents, influence, and property, to prop up the "Dissenting Interest," which they lament to find is sinking from under them. In the letter of the Dissenting Board of Ministers before quoted, they exhort their Brethren in the following strong and earnest terms. "Let all the resources and all the energies which our Churches can command, be placed in requisition. Let time and talent, and influence, and property, all be consecrated to the cause. Let a new and enlarged scale of pecuniary contribution, for the spread of the Gospel, (i. e. the unscriptural and unholy system of Independency,) both at home and abroad, render it evident, that every Christian has deliberately considered what proportion of his income, or his *earnings*, is due to his Lord." In using such pressing language as this, Dissenters surely "betray a great want of confidence in the truth and divinity of the system they have espoused. If they believe it to be of God, they ought not to be afraid of trusting it to his Providence. If it be a divine Religion, it does not need the interposition of carnal and secular agency to ensure its success;" it does not need such "carnal and secular agency" as human "*influence*," "*property*," "*pecuniary contributions*," "*income*, or *EARNINGS*." God supported Christianity in the Apostolic age, against all the opposition it met with, without having recourse to such "carnal and secular agency" as that which Dissenters now require. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, all the civil establishments of the world were arrayed against the new religion, and sought its destruction; and yet it lived, it spread, it prospered, its doctrines continued to be taught, its ordinances to be administered.* And if Dissent be of God, he will undoubtedly render it the same assistance, he will cause it "to live, and spread, and prosper, its doctrines to be taught, and its ordinances to be administered;" "if it be a divine reli-

gion, it does not need the interposition of carnal and secular agency to ensure its success." Why, then, should Dissenters indulge such fears and entertain such suspicions for the fate of their cause, as those which induce them to rally and excite their brethren to such extraordinary exertions? The Apostles exhorted the first Christians to no such unwarrantable exertions in support of Christianity. And, therefore, "attribute it to whatever cause you may, the suspicion is not at all creditable either to those who entertain it, or to the sect and system on whose behalf these unmanly fears are indulged.—If such fears are real, and "Dissenters" are thus tremblingly alive for the safety and preservation of "their Cause," they betray a great want of confidence in the truth and divinity of the system they have espoused. If they believe it to be of God, they need not to be afraid of trusting it to his Providence."* These are the very arguments which Dissenters use against Churchmen, for making use of means to support the Church, and why are they not equally as valid against themselves? It seems that all possible means are to "be placed in requisition" as absolutely necessary for the support of Dissent; but no means whatever are to be made use of in support of the Church. Churchmen, forsooth, are gravely told to trust to Providence; and to encourage them to do so, they are sophistically referred to the state of the Church "during the first three centuries of the Christian era;" as if the Church was unconditionally bound to exist exactly in the same state as she then did, in spite of absolutely impossibilities. Churchmen know, without being indebted to the *profound* researches of modern Dissenters, and "march of intellect" men, that there was then no National Establishment of Christianity; they also conceive, that that is no very sage reason why there should be none now. They simply believe that their National Religious

* Scales, 211.

Establishment is the best means of propagating and perpetuating Christianity, and best adapted for the spiritual welfare of the people; and daily observation, and experience, and positive facts, concur to strengthen and confirm their belief.

Mr. Scales says, that Churchmen assert, (and I have no very material objection to the assertion he has put into their mouths,) "that Religious Establishments are necessary to maintain the existence and honour of religion—that it cannot spread, and be perpetuated without them—that there is no other security for the continued teaching of its Doctrines, or Administration of its Ordinances, and that unless Kings and Rulers condescend to patronize and support it, Christianity can only whisper out of the dust." Upon these assertions, he argumentatively remarks—"We are not, we confess it, very careful to answer them in this matter, the assumption is altogether gratuitous, and must be repelled rather by facts and history than by argument—we put it, indeed, to the trial of ages, and we feel confident, that the result will show the fallacy of the notion." The reason why Mr. Scales is "not very careful to answer the assertions," is simply because he cannot. This is sufficiently evinced from his foolish and sophistical manner of attempting it, indeed, he acknowledges, that they "must be repelled rather by facts and history than by argument," thereby confessing his destitution of argument. And as to repelling them "by facts and history" that is utterly impossible, because in order to do it, he must produce parallel to the Church through all ages in her established state, a successive line of Churches of his own order in their non-established state, and then by balancing the results of which "facts," and impartial "history," say each has been productive, he may come to some kind of a decision. But as Churches of his own order are but of yesterday, history knows

nothing of a successive line of them, and consequently nothing of the results produced by them. He cannot, therefore, repel the assertions "by facts and history." Neither can he "put it, indeed, to the trial of ages," because as Dissent, or the "voluntary system" has only had "the experience of two centuries," and as one side, therefore, cannot be forthcoming, no trial can take place, except we allow Mr. Scales to be both the plaintiff and the judge. This, indeed, he seems to anticipate, for he says, "we feel confident that the result will show the fallacy of the notion." Most certainly, for as he is determined to be the judge in his own cause, such is sure to be the case, and he may well have good ground for his *confidence* as to the result. But let us see how he has conducted the ceremony of this mock trial. "During the first three centuries of the Christian era, all the civil Establishments of the world were arrayed against the new Religion, and sought its destruction. 'The Kings of the earth stood up, and the Rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ,' and yet it lived, it spread, it prospered." "Paganism," says he, "was" then "not only on the throne, but violently and actively opposed to the spread of the Gospel; and yet Christianity, instead of struggling for a mere existence, and dragging on a kind of living death, and whispering out of the dust, was then in its full vigour, strong and mighty in that very destitution of political power which men would deem its weakness, achieving its noblest victories, and prospering beyond all former precedents, and far above all subsequent aggrandizement and splendour." Now really, what in the name of all your tender consciences at once, has all this to do with answering the assertions Mr. Scales has attributed to those whom he opposes? What does it all amount to? What does the man mean? Does he mean to say, that because Paganism and "all the Civil Establishments of the world were arrayed against Christianity, during the first three centuries," they

ought to be arrayed against it now : if so, it must be the *duty* of Kings and Rulers to *persecute*, instead of even tolerating Christianity. And if such be the case, instead of blaming them for doing their duty in arraying themselves against it, and in persecuting it, Dissenters ought to exhort them to the performance of it, and commend them for doing it. Or does he mean to say, that the reason why Christianity spread, and prospered, and achieved such noble victories in its infancy, was because all the Civil Establishments of the world were then Pagan, and arrayed against it, and sought its destruction ? For if so, it must be their duty immediately to become Pagan, and violently persecute it, in order that it may again spread and prosper so gloriously. Or does he mean to say, that if “all the Civil Establishments of the world” were now violently opposed to Christianity, it would spread, and prosper, and achieve noble victories as it then did ? If he does, let me ask, that as he considers Dissent and Christianity synonymous, why Dissent did not “spread, and prosper, and achieve its noblest victories, and prosper beyond all former precedents,” in the reign of Charles the Second, when the “Civil Establishment of England was arrayed against it ?” Dissent then “dragged on a kind of living death,” and scarcely durst even “whisper out of the dust ;” but why was it not “then in its full vigour, strong and mighty, achieving its noblest victories, and prospering beyond all former precedents ?” Or does he mean to intimate, that if Christianity was not now allied to the State, it would spread, and prosper, and achieve such noble victories as before the days of Constantine ; or that it would spread, and prosper, and be more victorious in England than at present ? If so, why does not Dissent spread, and prosper, and achieve more noble victories than it does ? It is not thought to be allied to the State, and, therefore, has not that hindrance to prosperity which the Church is supposed to have. Is Dissent then spreading, and prospering, and victori-

ous? Certainly not, far from it. It is withering under its numerous quarrels, divisions, distractions, and defections, the destructive evils of which its adherents are bitterly lamenting, and wisely endeavouring to counteract, but in vain, because they are not accidental, but inherent in the system, and will ever be produced by it. Or finally, does he mean, that as there was no National Establishment of Christianity "during the first three centuries, there ought to be none now? If so, for it is absolutely impossible to guess what he really does mean, we may with equal propriety argue, that as there were no Bible Societies, or printed Bibles then, there ought to be none now; or, that as there were no Dissenting Academies or Colleges then, there ought to be none now; or, that as there were no Independent Congregational Dissenters then, there ought to be none now, and so on.

Nothing can exceed the absurdity of arguing in this way from the first ages of Christianity to the present. It is mere sophistry, used for no other purpose than to beguile the ignorant and unthinking. For there is no person of intelligence and thought who does not know, that in her primitive days, as has been before observed, the Church was endowed with miraculous and extraordinary powers from on high; and thereby enabled to triumph over all the opposition she had to encounter, that it might be manifest to the world that her establishment in the earth was of God and not of man, which would not have been the case had she been protected, encouraged, and patronized, by the Kings and Rulers of the earth. But to neglect employing all the means God, in the ordinary course of his Providence, has put in our power, for the spread and support of true Religion, and sit down till he vouchsafe miraculous and extraordinary powers for that purpose, would be nothing short of madness; because we have no reason now to expect any thing of the kind. And to attribute, as Dissenters do, all the corruptions of Christianity in every age to the alliance of the Church with the State,

is equally as unreasonable. Corruptions existed long before the establishment of the Church by Constantine, and are to be ascribed to the depravity of men themselves, and not to the union of Church and State.* Of this Dissenters themselves furnish abundant proof; for scores of Dissenting Meeting-houses, "once the fountains of purer principles," are now devoted to the propagation of the damnable doctrines of Socinianism, and surely their union to the State has not produced such awful corruption and departure from the faith. And this would undoubtedly have been the awful case of a vast number of our Churches, had it not been for the establishment of their faith and ritual, which effectually prevents the seeds of degeneracy, common to Churchmen with Dissenters, from taking root and propagating their deadly poison. And what, indeed, but a National Religious Establishment, like our own, could or would have furnished Religious Instruction to all the inhabitants of every part of our land? Why have not Dissenters done it? They tell us that the union of the Church and State is a clog and hindrance to Religion, (the true English of which is, that the Established Church is a clog and hindrance to Dissent); but they have no such union to clog and hinder them, why then have they not spread through the length and breadth of the land, and built Meeting-houses in every parish and village in the kingdom? They have nothing to prevent them. And if theirs is the alone true faith, and their cause is really the cause of God, why does he not bless

* Nothing can be more grossly and glaringly false than the insinuations and assertions of Dissenters, respecting the purity of the Church before her Establishment, (as it is termed) by Constantine and her great and consequent corruption after it. Every body who has read the Apostolic Epistles, and those of our blessed Lord by St. John to the seven Churches of Asia, and the History of the Church during the first three centuries of the Christian era, knows perfectly well that heresies, schisms, and evils of almost every description took their rise and existed BEFORE the days of Constantine. And, indeed, scarcely a heresy or a schism has manifested itself since that time, but what arose and existed in some shape or other BEFORE that time. All this is amply and triumphantly proved by appealing to History; which is done in a pamphlet entitled "The principle of voluntary churches, and not the principle of an establishment proved to be the real origin of Romish and Priestly domination. By James Gibson, A. M." of Glasgow.

it and prosper it more than he does? Why does he not prevent all those pernicious evils of which it is so abundantly productive, and which are paralyzing all its efforts, and deterring all considerate men from embracing it, and driving others from it? There are in England above twelve thousand parish and district Churches and Chapels belonging to the Establishment, and only about twelve hundred Congregational Independent Meeting-houses, besides about nine hundred Baptist Conventicles. So that for the twelve thousand parishes or districts in the kingdom, there are but about two thousand Dissenting Meeting-houses. And, therefore, for all the boasted efforts of these Dissenters, there would be, were it not for the Established Church, nearly ten thousand parishes or districts, utterly destitute of Religious Instruction, and the means of grace. So much for the "voluntary Church system!!"*

It may also be added, that several of the Dissenting Meeting-houses included in the above number, are shut up, and a great many others are small insignificant places, capable of containing but very small congregations. And also many of those which have stated Ministers are in a miserable condition. The Eclectic Review says, that as regards Dissent, "The times are

* Dissenters are very fond of appealing to America for a proof of the superiority of the voluntary principle over that of an Establishment. They assert, that on comparing the religious and moral state of America with that of our own country it will be found far superior. But all this is in direct opposition to plain matter of fact. Mr. Flint, an American Minister and principal of a Seminary, says, "The number of people in the western country who have their religion yet to choose exceeds two millions." Mr. Mills, another American Minister, says, "The whole country from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico is as the valley of the shadow of death. There are at present only a little more than one hundred Presbyterian or Congregational Ministers in it. Were these Ministers equally distributed throughout the country there would be only one to every ten thousand people, but now there are districts of country containing from twenty to fifty thousand inhabitants entirely destitute."—The author of *Men and Manners in America*, says, "I only wish to record my conviction, that those who adduce the state of religion in the United States as affording illustration of the inutility of an Established Church, are either bad reasoners or ignorant men." Those who wish to see a great mass of evidence on this subject collected from American writers, may consult "The past and present condition of Religion and Morality in the United States of America, an argument not for voluntary but for Established Churches." By Mr. Lorimer, of Glasgow.

critical, it is not to be concealed that the *voluntary* funds for supporting the Dissenting Ministry have been seriously diminished by the impoverishment of the people, and that *hundreds* of pious and deserving Ministers are struggling against the hardships of extreme poverty.* How then, it may justly be asked, can Dissent increase and spread itself, since it is evident, from the testimony of Dissenters themselves, that it really cannot uphold itself in its present position? And there is every prospect of its daily becoming worse; for while Dissenting Ministers are greatly and fast deteriorating, many of them becoming grossly immoral, and many others little else than mere political demagogues, the Clergy of the Church are daily becoming more pious and spiritually minded. The consequence of all this is sure to be the gradual withering of Dissent. And indeed "the Dissenting Interest," would have been in a far worse state than it is, had it not received such a vast accession of adherents in the last century from the efforts of Whitfield: for to say nothing of the vast numbers of individuals, many whole Congregations, once professing to belong to the Church, in some sense, have gone over to it. Considering, then, the declining state of the Dissenting, or "voluntary system," it is evident that if the Religious Instruction of our population depended upon it, thousands and hundreds of thousands of our countrymen, must pass into eternity, and perish before they could be supplied with the preaching of the Gospel.

But after all, what right upon the *voluntary* principle, have Dissenters "to make aggressive inroads into the empire of moral darkness, and to induce the unenlightened and neglected of the population," to attend to their spiritual welfare? What right have they to teach any persons whatever in religious matters, till those persons have *voluntarily* chosen them for that purpose? What right, upon their own principles, have the Home

Missionary Society to send their preachers up and down the country, "to creep into houses, leading captive silly women" and poor incautious men, under the loose pretence of preaching the Gospel, but, in reality, to propagate their own unscriptural and wicked notions, and thus to "serve their own belly?" Why do they not wait till the people send for them and choose them as their teachers? It is perfectly right, it seems, for the Home Missionary Society, without any choice at all, to appoint their Teaching Agents over people and over districts, but entirely wrong for the Established Church to appoint Ministers in every part of the land without the choice of the people. Meeting-houses are sometimes built upon speculation, and the Minister appointed before there is either a Church or Congregation to choose one, by some individual who knows little or nothing of the place. Where, in such cases, are the boasted principles of the voluntary system? How absurdly inconsistent are the practices of the voluntary gentry with their own theory!! All your Missionary exertions, whether Home or Foreign, are grossly at variance with your whole system; which prove most evidently, either that that system is erroneous, or that it is wrong to send men to preach the Gospel to the poor perishing heathen.

It also appears to me inconsistent with your system to baptize your children, for they may heartily disapprove of such an act when they are come of age to think for themselves. They may thus, as I myself was, *involuntarily* be made to become the adherents of a sect and system which they may afterwards discover to be most unscriptural and dangerous. Their consciences certainly ought not, according to your own principles, to be forestalled and *involuntarily* fettered by any notions of yours. Neither ought you, consistently with your voluntary system, to bring your children up according to any system of religion, or teach them anything of a religious nature—you ought, of course, to leave everything of that kind to their own

free and voluntary choice. Indeed, to such dreadful lengths would your pernicious principles carry you, if consistently followed out, that they would really unhinge the whole frame of civil and social society. But, happily even for yourselves, your gross inconsistencies prevent many of those enormous evils which consistency with your own iniquitous principles, would produce.

But, further, a Dissenting Minister himself, a wily enemy of the Church, in pointing out to one of his Teaching Brethren the inconsistencies of Dissenters with their own principles, says, "with respect to the principle that Government is to do nothing for the Church, but to let it alone, and the jealousy of its interference in the minutest particular, let us see how the matter stands *in fact*. It seems to be admitted that a Christian Government as such—not as so many individuals, but *as a Government*—may, and ought to do something in relation to the Sabbath, that is in relation to religion. The appointment of a Fast Day by the King in Council was on a recent occasion not only submitted to by the great body of Dissenters, but was adopted in preference to one fixed by themselves. There were two or three Ministers who objected to the change, and acted on their objections;* and this conduct was by far the most *consistent* with *theoretical* Independency. Again," he says, "your Ministers do not refuse every Government or political indulgence—they accept of exemption from military duty, and from serving on inquests and juries,—and they do right; but WHERE IS THE THEORY? *strictly keeping to that, what business has the Government to know them as Ministers, or as anything but Englishmen?* Laws, it seems, then *may* be made to confer special immuni-

* One thought he would fast neither for the King nor any one else. The "Hampshire Advertiser" had the following just after the Fast Day:—"On the Fast Day, a Dissenting Parson of Imber, at Chittern, All Saints, for the wager of a shilling, eat eleven large candles in fifteen minutes, which he did in twelve. A little time previously he eat greedily fifteen living mice. He was a rigid professor. He ought to have been tied to a cart's tail."

ties upon Ecclesiastics. Your chapels, too, under certain conditions, are exempt from taxation, nay, there is a Parliamentary grant, formerly denominated the 'REGIUM DONUM' annually voted for the augmentation of the small livings of Dissenting Ministers.*

Hence we discover, that although these self-same *consistent* Dissenters inveigh so bitterly against the union of Church and State, and declare it to be so abominably wicked for the State to confer privileges and benefits upon the Church, they themselves do not hesitate to receive privileges and benefits, and even direct grants of money from the State. No; and were the State to decree to-morrow, to transfer all the livings from the Church to Dissenters, they would receive them with all possible greediness, as in the halcyon days of the bloody Dissenting Cromwell; and not a word would they then utter but in praise of the Government for so graciously assisting "the Cause." For it is against the union of the *Church* with the State that Dissenters so reproachfully declaim. The union of *Dissent* with the State would not only be harmless, but most righteous and most laudable. This is clearly evident from the circumstance of Dissent being united to the State in the South Sea Islands. Yes, the very same Dissenters who so malignantly stigmatize the union of the Church and State, and of religion with politics, as they exist here in England, have actually united Dissent with the State, and closely blended religion with politics in the South Sea Islands. As though difference of longitude and latitude altered the nature of truth, so that what is so dreadfully wrong here in England is perfectly right on the other side of the Equator. According to these very candid and very consistent religionists, it is very wicked, indeed, for the King of England to encourage and patronize and establish religion, but truly good and right for the petty Kings of the South Sea Islands to do it. "It appears

from the volumes of Mr. Ellis," says the worthy Rector of St. George's, Birmingham, "as well as from Mr. Montgomery's Journal of Messrs. Tyerman and Bennett, that the (Dissenting) Missionaries laboured with no effect until the civil authorities stepped in to help them. Nothing was done, we are told, 'until the mighty moral change commenced from *the King himself*,' with the open annihilation of idolatry, and this *previous to his own conversion*. Henceforth, success was as rapid as before it had been hopeless. Upon this change the identity of civil politics with religious principles instantly appeared. An entire new code of laws became necessary for the Islands. 'A formal Parliament' was convened, consisting of the 'Royal Family and the Chiefs, the hereditary Legislators and the popular Representatives.' The Missionaries, when applied to for co-operation, did not allege the utter incompatibility of civil and religious concerns, but immediately *united with them*. Over this Parliament Mr. Nott, the chief Missionary, presided.—Subsequently to this, at the inauguration of the infant King, all the details were adopted, as far as circumstances would allow, of an English Coronation, and the office of Archbishop of Canterbury was performed by the Missionaries. The King was brought forth to the people, bound to administer justice, anointed with oil, presented with the Bible, and admonished in the very terms used by the British Primate. From this we may surely infer, that in the opinion of our opponents the Ministry is not infected by contact with the State, but that Civil and Christian polity is one." At any rate, whatever evils, whether real or imaginary, may arise from the union of religion with politics here, must equally arise from their connexion in the Society Isles. And if Dissenters do really believe as they pretend, that so many great evils arise from such a union in England, they are certainly blameable in a ten-fold degree for having promoted it in other places. But from their actions in the days of the murdering Cromwell, their favourite,

and from their actions in the Society Isles at the present day, we know well that their opposition to the union of religious and civil matters is purely hypocritical and factious, and proceeds from the same motive as the language of the fox in reference to the grapes. Only let *them* be united to the State, and enjoy the emoluments of the Church, and their scurrilous tongues and "tender consciences" will be equally quiet and peaceable.

There is, however, in reference to this subject, one thing absolutely necessary, which Dissenters must perform in order to conduct their opposition with either sense or reason, and that is to draw a line of demarcation between Religion and politics, particularly specifying what belongs to Religion and what to politics, that not only Kings and Governors, but also private individuals, may know what they may interfere in, and what they may not, for at present it is impossible for them to determine. But I fear that Dissenters will be ill able to afford the necessary information, for they are themselves at variance as to where the line is to be drawn.

Taking up a Leeds Newspaper a short time since, I perceived that a controversy, which had arisen out of a meeting convened for the purpose of petitioning Parliament to pass a Bill for the due Observance of the Lord's Day, was then existing between the Dissenting Editors and a Mr. Acworth, a Dissenting Teacher in Leeds, all three bitter opponents to the Established Church. The Editors strenuously advocated the right of Government to legislate in regard to the Lord's Day. This the Teacher as strenuously denied, justly contending that if Government had a right to interfere in one religious matter they had in another. He says to the Editors, "The ground you have assumed is utterly untenable. You must either advance or recede. Allow the right of the State to interfere in all cases, or deny its right to interfere in any. You will then be *consistent*. Take any intermediate position, and you

instantly expose yourselves to the charge of *palpable inconsistency*." "Were you, Gentlemen, the advocates of a *National Religious Establishment*, you would be perfectly consistent with yourselves; but as Dissenters you have betrayed *egregious inconsistency*." Now this is all perfectly right; for the Editors certainly abandon their own Dissenting notions, and take the very same ground as that occupied by "the advocates of a National Religious Establishment," but as certainly with the most "*egregious inconsistency*;" for if the Government have a right to enact laws for the better Observance of the Lord's Day, they certainly have a right to interfere in all other matters of a religious nature. If they have a right to interfere in one thing they have in all. No "*intermediate position*" can be taken, as the Teacher very justly observes, without "*palpable inconsistency*." The Editors, however, seem much more disposed to rest in their own "*egregious inconsistency*" than to go the dreadful lengths to which consistency clearly requires them, and the Teacher's principle would inevitably lead them. For on the ground taken by their opponent, they justly say, "it would be impossible not merely to enforce by human laws the Observance of the Sabbath, but even *to guard life, property, and chastity from violation*. As Mr. Acworth thinks Parliament is not justified in enforcing the fourth Commandment, we should be glad to know on what principle he would allow it to *enforce the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth*? The one as well as the other is a religious obligation; but the one as well as the other is also eminently conducive to the well being of society. On this ground the legislative enforcement of both must be defended, or of neither." The Editors again rightly remark, that if the principle of the Teacher be right, "Governments have no right to enforce any Commandment in the Decalogue, or to punish its violation; they have no right *to punish murder, adultery, theft or defamation*. For abstinence from these things is a *religious duty*—it is a command

of God—it is a Divine decree. According to Mr. Acworth's principle," they continue to say, "it is a presumptuous interference for Governments to step in to reinforce with their authority the laws and institutions of God. We ought, therefore, to repeal all our laws against every crime and every vice which disturbs and deforms society, for all such crimes and vices have been prohibited in the Scriptures. To such monstrous conclusions would Mr. Acworth's principle lead him; and whilst he warns us to be aware of being drawn by the cause we advocate into inconsistency, it behoves him to look well to his own position, and ascertain if he is not in danger of sanctioning conclusions which he would devoutly deprecate." As the remarks of these opposing Dissenters go to the very bottom of the subject, I have given the whole sum of what each side has advanced. But have they settled the point as to how far Governments are to interfere, and how far they are not? Nothing of the kind; far from it. That they will never do; and, therefore, Churchmen may safely tell them, that when they have agreed upon the subject amongst themselves, they will immediately acquiesce with them, but not before. Till then, indeed, they cannot reasonably expect them to do so.

Like most other men they prove themselves adepts at exposing the errors, "inconsistencies," and "monstrous conclusions" of others, but they will not see their own. Mr. Acworth very correctly says, that the Editors to be consistent, must either allow the State to go the whole length pleaded by the advocates of the National Religious Establishment, or not to interfere at all. In which he is perfectly right and consistent. For if they allow Governments to interfere at all, the question immediately recurs, and ever will till it is decisively answered—"HOW FAR ARE THEY TO GO?"

Churchmen say they are strictly bound to enforce all the commands of God; and their views are correct, consistent, and Scriptural. The Dissenting Mr. Ac-

worth, and many other Dissenters, say, they have no right to enforce, or interfere with, any of them. And their views, too, are strictly consistent,—but, I must add, *truly diabolical*; for according to them, as the Editors truly observe, “Governments have no right to enforce any Commandment in the Decalogue, or to punish its violation; they have no right to punish *murder, adultery, theft, or defamation, or, indeed, any crime or vice whatever*, for they are all forbidden in the Scriptures.” The Editors, however, with, I would hope, a great majority of the Dissenters, seeing the dreadful consequences of denying that Governments have a right to enforce any of the Commandments of God, endeavour to take an “intermediate position,” though with the most “palpable” and “egregious inconsistency.” They advocate that Governments have a clear right to enforce the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and even the fourth Commandment, but seem to intimate that they have no such right to enforce the rest, but for what reason it is impossible to say. God has himself in his Word no where said that Governments are to enforce such and such commands, but not others. The notion, therefore, that they are to do so, is a mere human tradition, and consequently to be at once rejected. Except men are to be allowed to pick and cull out of all the commands which God has given, just such as suit themselves, and to reject the rest, which will ever be those that tend to curb their own vicious inclinations, but which are for that very reason the more necessary to remain binding upon their consciences.

With respect to the first three Commands, it appears to me that Governments have just as much right to enforce them as others, how ill soever they may brook it. The first Commandment of the Decalogue is the fountain of the rest, and that of which all the others are but branches. And if the first be not believed and obeyed, there is not the slightest security for the obedience of the rest. A man who denies the existence of God, will not of course feel himself bound to obey

any of his commands, and cannot, therefore, be a good member of society; for having nothing but the fear of man before his eyes, he will not hesitate to commit the grossest villainies whenever he has any prospect of eluding the eyes of his fellow-creatures. Whereas, a sense of the omnipresence and omniscience of the Almighty will ever be more effectual in deterring men from both open and secret wickedness, than all the human laws that ever were, or ever can be enacted. Besides, the right of Government to enforce the first Commandment rests upon the very same ground as their right to enforce the fourth, or any of the others; and as the first is the foundation of all the others, it is more "eminently conducive to the well-being of society." Indeed, I fearlessly deny that God has given a single Commandment that is not "eminently conducive to the well-being of society." To assert the contrary, would be to impugn the wisdom and goodness of the Most High. There is, in short, no other alternative, than either to allow that Government has a right to interfere respecting all the commands of God, or deny its right to interfere with any. To assert the latter, is downright Infidelity. To admit the former, is consistent with Christianity and real Churchmanship.

Governors, as such, are not exempt from obedience to God, for they are his servants, "the Powers that be are ordained of God;" and for that very reason and no other they are to be obeyed; and in consequence of it, they are bound, whatever they do, to "do all to the glory of God," without any exception. If any actions be excepted, or if Governors themselves, as such, be excepted from obedience to the commands of God, let Dissenters, who continually boast that "the Word of God is their only rule of faith and practice," point out to us where such exceptions are mentioned in that blessed Book, and where it is there said that Religion has nothing to do with politics, and we will then agree with them, but not till then. Until, therefore, they do that, we shall continue to assert that

every action whatever, that a man does, whether he be a Governor or a subject, ought to be influenced by Religion, and done with a view to the glory of God ; and that the higher his station in life, and the greater the talents committed to him, the more weighty is his responsibility to God. To assert that Religion has nothing to do with politics, is equivalent to saying, that a man may be the greatest political villain in existence, and yet be a religious and pious man. In his political character, as the Dissenting Mr. James immorally and disgustingly says, “ he may *piously* (!!!) lift his hand against the Government of his country ;” * and of course “ piously” murder the Governors of his country should they not “ piously” accede to his pious wishes. Yes, he may “ piously” murder the King, as the Independents “ piously” did in the days of that pious Dissenter Oliver Cromwell, who “ piously” murdered five thousand loyal Scots, and “ piously” called it “ the work of the Gospel,” and afterwards “ piously” sold seven thousand prisoners of war into perpetual slavery, to enjoy full “ liberty of conscience,” I presume. †

Whatever Mr. James and other Dissenters may think, every Christian will detest and abhor the Infidel notion, that Religion is not to have any thing to do with politics—and that it is not to influence the civil actions of life, and will feel it his duty to endeavour to counteract its licentious and immoral tendency ; for if consistently followed out, it will destroy every bond of civil society. According to such a principle, Governments may unblushingly be told that “ they have no right to enforce any command in the Decalogue, or to punish its violation”—that “ they have no right to punish murder, adultery, theft, or defamation”—because the commands prohibiting such crimes are contained in the Scriptures, and are of a religious nature. To such monstrous conclusions will the modern doctrine of Infidel and semi-infidel Dissenters naturally lead its poor deluded votaries.

* James, 43.

† Macaulay's History of England, vol. 3, p. 72.

There are, however, I am glad to say, a few Dissenters who have penetration enough to perceive the evils of such a notion, and sufficient value for the Word of God, and sound principles to reject it with Christian indignation. The late Mr. Thorp, of Bristol, and the late Mr. Eagleton, of Huddersfield, men who for soundness of judgment, solidity of learning, and enlarged views, outweigh a host of the upstart "beardless youths," and "pulpit fops," of modern Dissent, were of this class. Mr. Eagleton, in an excellent Sermon, preached and published at Huddersfield, in 1829, speaks as follows, and the excellence of the quotation must excuse its length :—He boldly says, "this I will say in the face of the whole world, that our manifold divisions are not compatible with the supremacy of Christian love and that modern liberality; engendered by the secret leaven of Infidelity, the insubordination of human intellect, to the decisions of eternal truth, which is one and evermore the same. And whence, but from the same restless spirit of insubordination to the dominion of revealed truth, is the wide spreading rage for the dissolution of the Union, that subsists between the Church and the State? Why contend so vehemently for the emancipation of British politics from the control of the principles of Religion? If you banish the interference of Religion from the affairs of the Administration, and the procedure of the Government, an Atheist may be as eligible to office as a man who fears God. Politics, however, cannot be separated from Religion, without trampling under foot the oracles of God, which direct and control the Minister of State, as well as the Minister of the Word. He who is the chief Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, is the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, and to Him as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, all mortal Sovereigns, and Nobles and Rulers are accountable for their official conduct. If, then, our Governors rule under Christ, and are accountable to Him, verily, they ought to rule for him, and with an eye to his

glory ; and, consequently, they should be Religious Governors, and their Government a Religious Government. No Government, I allow, should legislate in the Church, and usurp the prerogatives of Christ, the only Head of the Body ; but, every Government should legislate as the Servants of Christ, and Members of his Church. Exemption from His authority, by whom Kings reign, and Princes decree judgment, is the character of an Infidel Government ; and, only, as the body politic becomes infidelized, can the mass of the people desire the Policy and Religion of their country to be separated. Such a separation, however, there is too much reason to apprehend. England, by having united herself to the Church of Rome, against which she formerly protested with the solemnities of an oath, has inconsiderately adopted the Infidel sentiment, that Religion has nothing to do with politics. Every thing around us seems favourable to the diffusion of this sentiment ; no man is, or can be wholly free from the leaven, which is secretly and silently working in every part of the land ; and multitudes will apply it to other departments of civil life, till at length, we may be told without a blush, ‘ Religion has nothing to do with education—with commerce—with domestic economy—with the marriage union—with individual conduct in the world.’”

Such were the accurate sentiments of this worthy man, in reference to “the union that subsists between the Church and the State,” and to them, every unprejudiced Christian heart will respond. The immoral and impious doctrine, that Governments have nothing to do with Religion is, indeed, but of very modern origin. Not one of our venerable and glorious English Reformers held any such doctrine. They would have boldly lifted up their voices against it. And Knox, in Scotland, and Calvin, and Beza, and all the Divines of the Augsburg Confession, the Representatives of a large portion of the Protestants on the Continent ; and also Melancthon, Luther, and Bucer, were all equally advocates for a

Church Establishment. Such was, also, the case with all the old Non-conformists, of whom modern Dissenters pretend to be the followers; although as a Dissenter himself remarks, "were they now to land upon our shores, they would find themselves in a strange country, and feel but little sympathy for a cause that has so strangely *deteriorated*." Modern Dissenters, in fact, stand condemned by the wise and good of every age and nation, even by all those of their own sect, who lived in former days. So far were they from considering a Church Establishment sinful, that as Bishop Stillingfleet observes, "All the old Non-conformists thought themselves bound to communicate with the Church of England, and looked upon separation from it to be a SIN, notwithstanding the corruptions supposed (by them) to be in it." "This I have proved," continues he, "with so great evidence in the foregoing discourse, that those who deny it may with the help of the same metaphysics, deny that the sun shines." And the Dissenting Mr. Owen, in "a Sermon preached before the Long Parliament, October 13, 1652," labours to prove "The power of the Civil Magistrate about the things of the Worship of God." "Some think," says he, "if you (the Rebel Parliament) were well settled, you ought not as Rulers of the nation, to put forth your power for the interest of Christ. The good Lord keep your hearts from that apprehension. The Lord hath promised, that the Magistrates whom he will give, own, and bless, shall put forth their power, and act in that capacity wherein he hath placed them in the world for the good, furtherance, and prosperity of the truth and Church of Christ." "And," says he, "if it once comes to this, that you shall say you have nothing to do with Religion as Rulers of the nation, God will quickly manifest that he hath nothing to do with you as Rulers of the nation. Certainly, it is incumbent on you to take care, that the faith which was once delivered to the saints, in all the necessary concernments of it may be protected, pre-

served, propagated to, and among the people over which God hath set you. If a father, as a father, is bound to do what answers this in his own family unto his children—a master, as a master to his servants. If you will justify yourselves as Fathers or Rulers of your country, you will find in your accompt this to be incumbent on you.” “This argument, *a fortiori* of Dr. Owen, from the father of a family to the father of his country, is absolutely invincible. Dean Milner, in his triumphant dissertation of Church Establishments, adopts the same mode of reasoning. We cannot spare room for quotations from this unanswerable production, but we earnestly recommend its perusal to our readers. It is remarkable, that Dr. Owen, the Republican Dean of Christ’s Church, and Dr. Milner, the loyal Dean of Carlisle, should in their reasonings on Ecclesiastical Establishments be so nearly agreed. It is further remarkable, that Dr. Owen, who would (perhaps) have spurned at a Deanery from the hands of a legitimate Sovereign, accepted a Deanery from the hands of a bloody usurper! It is finally remarkable, that Dr. Owen, who could elaborately prove, that a set of rebels “as Rulers of the nation” had power in Religious affairs, yet denied this very power to his lawful King.*

But after all, is not Dissent just as much established and just as parliamentary as the Church of England? If the Church be parliamentary or established, because her faith and mode of worship are sanctioned, authorized, and made lawful by Parliament, why is not Dissent equally so? For by the Toleration, and other Acts of Parliament, Dissent, which had previously been unlawful, was sanctioned, authorised, and made lawful, or, as some will have it, fully and properly established; and quite as much so, and in the very same manner as the Church herself, that is by Parliament. Mr. Lowell himself, a Dissenter, speaking of the Church of Eng-

* Church of England and Dissent, 8vo. p. 30.

land, designates it the Endowed Church. "I have used the phrase Endowed Church," says he, "instead of Established Church, because the Dissenting Churches are established; for which," continues he, "we have the opinion of Lord Mansfield, who, in a speech in the House of Lords, observed, that, 'the Dissenter's way of worship is not only exempted from punishment, but rendered innocent and lawful,—IT IS ESTABLISHED.'"* Dissenting Preachers, and Dissenting Meeting-houses are licensed and guarded, and their privileges, property, and endowments as firmly secured and confirmed to them by the laws, as the tithes and glebes of the Established Church. Is not Dissent, in short protected by Government, allied to the State, and in every sense whatever, an Established, or Parliamentary Religion? Is it not partly supported by direct and annual Parliamentary Grants of money? In what other sense can any Religion be established or allied to the State? The Church, in proportion to her numbers and property, is not at all more so, nor indeed so much: for no direct and annual Parliamentary Grants are voted in support of the Clergy. They are supported by property which exclusively belongs to the Church, and which the State never gave, and of which it has no more right to rob the Church, than it has to rob Dissenting Meeting-houses of their endowments, or to authorise one of its minions to meet me upon the highway and steal my watch out of my pocket.

To assert and insinuate, as Dissenters are very fond of doing, that they are independent of Parliament, or that Parliament has not as much power over Dissent, as it has over the Church is ridiculous; because it is well known that Parliament has passed Acts, rendering Dissent criminal, and punishing it as such. The Corporation Act actually prohibited Dissenting Teachers from exercising their preaching talents, and people from hearing them. If Dissenters did not depend upon

Parliament for its sanction to their Form of Religion, why did they not then continue to hold their Meetings, why did they not then prosper abundantly? They are very fond of comparing the Apostolic age with the present, and of insinuating that if Christianity were not allied to the State, and were otherwise circumstanced as it was in its primitive days, it would prosper as it then did. Why then, I again ask, did not Dissent, which Dissenters consider as synonymous with Christianity, prosper in the days of Charles the Second? Its alliance with the State was certainly no manner of hindrance. The State persecuted it, and why did it not then rise triumphantly above persecution, as Christianity did before the days of Constantine? And why did Dissenters seek the permission and sanction of Parliament to allow them to exercise their Form of Worship? And why are Dissenters now seeking their own temporal aggrandizement by all sort of means whatever, *dolis et mendaciis turpissimis non exceptis*. How utterly inconsistent is the practice of such people with their reiterated professions! How disgustingly contemptible do all such professions appear, when we see those who make them contradicting them by their continual practice!! And how disgusting is the cant about the great injury the Church receives from her union to the State, as though they were so exceedingly anxious about the welfare of the Church, when we see them daily manifesting their deadly hatred to the Church, and using all possible means to obtain that which they decry as such an injury to the Church. Suppose the Church is injured by her union to the State, and her exertions thereby paralyzed, as they assert: What is that to them? What need they care for that? It does not injure them. It does not paralyze their exertions. It is so much the better for them, for as they are not so injured and clogged, nor their exertions so paralyzed, surely they might long ago have surpassed in numbers and prosperity, and, in every other respect, far outstripped the less fortunate,

the injured, clogged, and paralyzed object of their enmity. To hear such men canting about the injury accruing to the Church from her alliance to the State, and appearing concerned on account of it, is really nauseous; because, we know that it is all mere empty pretence, and that the real injury of the Church is what they would glory in, because it would afford them the better prospect of forwarding their own ambitious views. Why did so many of them take such great pains to push into circulation the infamous letter of the Dissenting Mister Beverley? Was it because of their anxiety for the welfare of the Church, or even for their love of Truth?

Mr. Scales, after having written above eighty pages in opposition to the Church as an Establishment, anticipates objections, that he naturally supposed his shameful misrepresentations and false assertions would, on the bare perusal, immediately suggest. Having represented the Church as exercising the most unrelenting tyranny and cruelty over those who Dissent from her, he, nothing to his own credit says, "should we be told that a rigid enforcement of uniformity is no longer sought, that much more liberty is allowed, and that men are now tolerated in the enjoyment of their own opinions, and the observance of their own forms and modes,—we readily and gladly acknowledge it."* Then, why in the name of common honesty, so jesuitically and basely insinuate that such is not the case? Why so shamelessly misrepresent the Church as though she were actually inflicting the punishment of fire and sword upon Dissenters on account of their religious opinions? The man's own acknowledgment of the contrary at once condemns him. The fact is, Dissenters have an object to accomplish,—the destruction of the Established Church; and for this, their ungodly purpose, all sorts of slander, abuse, misrepresentation, and falsehood, are made use of—for this

* Scales, p. 202.

infernal purpose, Dissenters unite with all sorts of characters whatever—with Papists, Socinians, Free-thinkers, Deists, Infidels, and Atheists, a motley crew to be sure, and such as is alone worthy of the object they have in view. We find the Dissenting writers of the Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society's scurrilous tracts, and Hunt, the dealer in another and a far less injurious kind of blacking—Blackburn, a Dissenting Teacher, and the editor of the Congregational, and Wakley, the editor of the Ballot—the Dissenting Dr. Cox, librarian to the London Infidel University, and Carlile, the Infidel publisher of Fleet-street—the Dissenting Dr. Bennett, late Tutor at Rotherham, and O'Connell, the Popish Agitator—Mr. James, a Dissenting Teacher at Birmingham, and his neighbour Mc Donnell, the jesuitical Popish Priest—Mr. Scales, of Leeds, and Mr. Cobbett, all uniting together in their opposition to the Church. One would naturally imagine, that the very circumstance of all sorts of Infidels and Atheists being opposed to any thing connected with Religion, would be quite sufficient to deter any professing Christian from assisting in such opposition. For in any thing to the advantage of Christianity, the scoffing Infidel will never be seen, but in every thing detrimental to its true interests, he will ever assuredly be found.

The opposition of such characters to the Church, I cannot but consider as no mean proof of her truth and intrinsic excellence. If persecution be a good criterion of the true Church, the Church of England, persecuted as she is, on all hands, and by all sorts, bids very fair at present to attain that eminent distinction. And in case the Church were down to-morrow, what would be the result? Why, all those very sects, parties, and factions, who now so highly honour the Church, by uniting together to hate and destroy her, having no longer any common bond of union amongst them, would immediately riot, and quarrel, and fight amongst themselves for the ascendancy.

In concluding this subject, I remark, that Dissenters, even the most furious and bigoted amongst them, cannot but admit, how reluctantly soever it may be, that the Established Church in providing religious instruction for hundreds and hundreds of thousands, who but for such an establishment must have been utterly destitute of it, has done some good; and were they in reality the pious and holy people they pretend to be, they would heartily rejoice that such good has been done, and not seek to destroy the instrument that has done it: they would rejoice that the land is covered with a Church, which the *Eclectic Review*, the organ of Dissent, confesses “it cannot be denied, *professes the life-giving doctrines of the Gospel, favours every great principle rescued from Rome by the Reformers, and puts into the lips of the people, a language of devotion unrivalled in majesty, beauty, propriety, and comprehension.*”

To belong to a Church which compels such praises from even her bitter enemies, is an honour and a blessing highly enjoyed by

Your's, Sir, most obediently,

L. S. E.

LETTER XIII.

ON THE KING'S SUPREMACY IN ECCLESIASTICAL MATTERS.

SIR,

CLOSELY connected with the subject just concluded is another, upon which I will make a few brief remarks. I allude to the King's exercising Supreme Authority over the Church—that is, over all the Members of the Church, whether Clergy or Laity, and over all their actions, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil. “We learn from the Old Testament,” (which Dissenters may be told is believed by Churchmen to be the Word of God,) “that under the Mosaic Dispensation the Kings exercised the chief power in all matters which appertained to Religion, and that their Authority was acknowledged by the Priests and Levites: Abimelech appeared before Saul, and answered the accusations which the King urged against him as High Priest.* David made many regulations concerning the Public Worship of God; and particularly, he instituted the courses of the Priests.† Solomon moved Abiathar from the High Priesthood;‡ and the succeeding Kings frequently gave direction and orders which were readily obeyed, in cases relating solely to ecclesiastical persons and things.”§

In the New Testament, we find Christians commanded as follows—“Let every soul be subject to the

* 1 Sam. xxii. 11. † 1 Chron. xxiii. 6. ‡ 1 Kings, ii. 26 and 27.

§ See Bishop Tomline's *El. Theol.* vol. ii. p. 552.

Higher Powers."* "Put them in mind to be subject to Principalities and Powers, to obey Magistrates."† "Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King as Supreme, or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."‡ These precepts, as well as others of the like nature, contain no exception in favour of the Clergy any more than of the Laity. They are equally obligatory upon both descriptions of persons, in matters Ecclesiastical as well as Civil.

In order, however, to obviate objections, and to set the matter in a clear light, the Thirty-seventh Article of the Church explains and limits the power of the King. "We give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word or of the Sacraments." This can be exercised by none except those who have been duly and properly Ordained expressly for the purpose; nor has the right of doing so ever been claimed by any Christian Prince. "The Jewish Priests submitted to King Uzziah in all things which were not forbidden by the Law of Moses; but when he attempted to burn incense in the Temple, which was permitted to none but Priests, they openly resisted him, and the sacrilegious Monarch, while he held a censor in his hand, was suddenly smitten by God with a leprosy,"§ "and was a leper unto the day of his death."|| The Church of England does not allow the Civil Magistrate to interfere in the celebration of Divine Ordinances; but she considers it the bounden duty of every Christian to yield obedience to him, whenever he does not command any thing contradictory to the Word of God. In every thing else he has a right to demand implicit obedience; if not, in what does his authority consist? Dissenters, however, are not very careful in this matter, their own fancies must be attended to whether the King is obeyed or not. Mr. Scales, speaking of the

* Rom. xiii. 1.

† Titus, iii. 1.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13 and 14.

§ See Bishop Tomline ut supra, p. 556.

|| 2 Chron. xxvi. 16, &c.

Civil Powers, says, "Religion is not the province of those Powers, and there we owe them no allegiance."* "Thou shalt do no murder"—"Thou shalt not commit adultery"—"Thou shalt not steal," &c. are religious commands; and being, therefore, according to Mr. Scales, not within "the province of those" (i. e. the Civil) "Powers," Dissenters, in regard to such commands, "owe them" (i. e. the Civil Powers) "no allegiance." This, surely, is "liberty of conscience" sufficient for any Dissenter, how "*tender*" soever his conscience may be. Mr. Scales proceeds, "Civil and Ecclesiastical Governments occupy departments which are totally distinct from each other; and their boundaries are clearly defined by our Heavenly Teacher when he says, 'Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's.'" But, then, the question immediately recurs, what things are God's, and what things are Cæsar's? If they be so "totally distinct from each other, and so "clearly defined," as it is asserted, it would surely be no difficult thing for Dissenters to "*define*" and distinguish them from each other, that no mistake may arise. The dispute does not turn upon the text itself; it is agreed on all hands that we are to "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." The question is what are Cæsar's, and what are God's? what things are purely Religious, and what are purely Civil? Mr. Scales says, that Civil Magistrates are to be obeyed "in all things which come fairly within their jurisdiction." But the question again recurs, what are the things which do come within their jurisdiction? and who is to be the judge as to whether they come "*fairly*" within it or not? If, according to the Dissenting notion, every individual is to be allowed to judge for himself, the Authority of the King is a mere nonentity, and there is an end to the whole business at once.

All the cant that the King in exercising Authority in Ecclesiastical matters, robs Jesus Christ of his Headship over the Church, is perfectly childish and silly, and not worth a word. We might just as well say, that an inferior Civil Magistrate, or one from whom there is no appeal, in exercising the Authority vested in him, robs the King of his Supremacy and Honour. Dissenters are also very fond of asserting, that Churchmen, in acknowledging the Supremacy of their King over all persons and in all matters, as well Ecclesiastical as Civil, within his jurisdiction, reject and abandon the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the Church, and set up the King as Head in his stead. Really what impious folks these Church people must be!! Who can for a moment wonder that such pious, holy, and heavenly-minded folks as Dissenters are, should piously indulge in "*keen hatred, and now and then a little round abuse of the Church*" and Church-folks? Who can for an instant suppose, that these said Dissenters, who monopolize all the piety and holiness in the kingdom—if not in the world—and who, to say nothing of their *modesty* and self-righteousness, are withal persons of very *weak* and *tender* consciences, can possibly be wrong? in what they, good folks, so conscientiously, so *liberally*, and so *very disinterestedly* affirm respecting those wicked fellows who are so stupid as to go to Church, and will not do themselves the kindness of hiring and paying for seats in the *Dissenting Meeting-houses*? How provoking it is that these bigoted Churchfolks will not go to hear the Dissenting Teachers, who alone preach the Gospel—are so liberal and charitable—so pious and holy—and who, seeing they are not of this world, but of that kingdom which is not of this world, never dabble in politics—never step out of that kingdom which is not of this world into political meetings, or any thing of that sort—never interfere in any thing at all but what is purely of a spiritual nature, and who are taking such draughts of knowledge, and such rapid strides in the

“march of intellect,” that it really seems as though “wisdom would die with them.” Seeing this is the case, how foolish must Churchmen be to adhere to those old-fashioned notions which influence them to “obey them that have rule over them,” and to “Honour the King,” and which induce them to imagine that whilst they are obeying their Bishops and honouring their King, they are really and truly obeying God, who has commanded them to do so.

But to be serious, which is not a little difficult, with such people, one finds it not very easy to imagine how Dissenters can keep their countenances, and so gravely assert that the King in claiming, and we in acknowledging, his Supremacy in *all* causes within his dominions, robs the Saviour of that honour which is due to him as Head of the Church. The falsehood of such assertion is really so impudently glaring, that it is a wonder that common prudence does not prevent their utterance. Dissenters might justly think that people would at once suppose such assertions to have a little pious craft about them, and to be invented in the plenitude of “keen hatred and abuse of the Church,” to serve the pious purpose of keeping up “pure attachment to Dissenting principles.” They cannot possibly believe such nonsense themselves, and how, therefore, they can fancy that others will believe it, I cannot conceive.

Nevertheless, we find it stated in almost every Dissenting work, as a principle of Dissent, that “the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church.”* Now, with what sense or reason can this be asserted *as a principle of Dissent*, except upon the assumption that it is *not* a principle of the Church; for if it be a principle of the Church—if the Church hold as a truth that “the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church,” how can it possibly be a principle of Dissent—how can it be a reason for Dissenting from the

Church? The fact is, Dissenters continually insinuate, and sometimes shamefully assert, that the Church of England actually denies that Christ is the Head of the Church, and that she acknowledges the King to be her Head instead of Christ, than which Hell itself never forged a fouler calumny. Every body knows that the King himself is a Member of the Church, and that as a Christian he acknowledges Christ as the only Head of the Church, and himself as his subject, strictly bound to obey and observe his laws, commands, institutions, and ordinances, and in every sense amenable to Christ as his Lord, Master, and Head, for every act of disobedience to his laws. This is of itself quite sufficient to show the wickedness of the Dissenting falsehood.*

Mr. Scales, "with characteristic sophistry," after stating it as a principle of Dissent, that "the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church," quotes passages from Archbishop Usher and Bishop Jewel in support of that principle, *as a principle of Dissent*; thus insinuating that those two learned and illustrious Prelates, "whose praise is in all the Churches," approved of that principle, *as a principle of Dissent*; for if such be not Mr. Scales's unmanly and dishonest insinuation, where was the propriety of his quoting them? Surely he did not quote them to show, that it is a principle of the Church, for he would thus have condemned his own false assertions, that the Church does not hold the Lord Jesus Christ as her only head, and have defeated instead of serving his own wicked cause—a cause which cannot be supported without having recourse to the meanest and most contemptible trickery. I do indeed contend, fearless of contradiction, that the passages which Mr. Scales has so jesuitically

* I by no means wish to insinuate here, that Dissenters believe the King to be a Christian; for as they do not believe anything of the kind, such an insinuation would be very unjust. The King, in common with all who do not bow the knee to their Dissenting idol, is considered by Dissenters as "of the world," and "without"—that is, an "unbeliever, or as no Christian.

quoted entirely destroy that which he intended them to support. They unequivocally and demonstratively prove that the *Church* believes that "the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church;" but it is absolutely impossible for Mr. Scales, with all his sophistication and jesuitry, to show that they prove that such a belief is a principle of Dissent. He knows well that those two Prelates hated his Dissenting notions, as contrary to the Scriptures of Truth. His Dissenting system, indeed, was not hatched in Jewel's days; and Usher has most powerfully and unanswerably written against it. Where, then, was his honesty in quoting them in support of his Dissenting notions? Does the secret lie in this, that he wished to insinuate, that although the Church denies that Jesus Christ is her only Head, (as he falsely says she does,) she stands condemned not only by those *pious souls*, the Dissenting Teachers, but even by two of her own Prelates? If the Church of England does not believe that "the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church," why did not the Church or the King reprove those two Prelates for asserting such a Doctrine? The fact speaks for itself. And as I have now the honour and happiness of being a Member of the same Church as those worthy Prelates were, I hereby declare that I perfectly agree with them in this, that "the Lord Jesus Christ is the *only* Head of the Church;" now, if in doing so I hold an opinion which is contrary to the received opinion of the Church of England, I beg that I may be reprov'd for it. If I be not—if no notice whatever be taken of my holding such an opinion—then shall I consider it as a sufficient refutation of all the falsehoods of those "slandrous folks," the Dissenters, with regard to this subject.

They say that the King, in asserting his right to supremacy in all Ecclesiastical as well as Civil causes, claims a "gem that has been obtained by robbery—that has been torn from the brow of the Saviour, and that ought instantly to be restored to the head and

crown of Him who alone has a right to wear it,"* and that he thus daringly invades the dominion of Christ, dethrones him, usurps his authority, and becomes an "exalted, and all but Deified man."† That this jargon is more than "*all but*" chimerical nonsense, cannot but be manifest to any one pretending to the least degree of reason. It is somewhat marvellous that such writers do not at once represent the King as claiming Divine Worship—they do "*all but*" do it. It would only require an additional stretch of their great love of truth and extreme modesty. That the King is on earth supreme in all Ecclesiastical causes, cannot be denied; but that he thus infringes upon the dignity and glory of Christ as Head of the Church, as Dissenters ridiculously misrepresent, is absurd enough. He is just as much the Head or Supreme Governor in all the religious matters of Dissent, as he is of the Church. He settles the disputes of Dissenters, and determines controversies between them, and that even in matters of faith.‡ I could produce several cases that have oc-

* Scales, p. 236.

† Scales, p. 70.

‡ The way in which some of these disputes and divisions arise is sometimes very droll. The following is a curious instance of this. In a village in the West-Riding of Yorkshire, which I could name, there was some little time since a Dissenting Meeting-house in want of a Teacher. It was shortly afterwards supplied. The people *hired* a young man to be their servant, who gratified their "itching ears," and pleased them very well indeed at first, as is usually the case, and as he was in duty bound. But alas! alas! for the boasted principles of Dissent and the pretended purity and piety of Dissenters, this harmony was but of short duration. One of the "Lord-deacons" had a daughter whom he wished the young Teacher to marry, and in order to bring the matter about, the young woman was put in the way of the Teacher as much as if not more than common decency would allow. Whenever he called at her father's house she was left alone with him in the room, which I presume is the custom under such circumstances. But be that as it may, the Teacher would have nothing to say to the fair damsel upon the all-important business of matrimony. The Deacon's wife, however, a straight forward dame it would seem, was determined to give the Teacher a fair opportunity, and to bring the matter to a successful issue if possible. She, therefore, on one occa-

curred within my own knowledge in proof of this ; but one will suffice. In a populous village there is a large Dissenting Meeting-house, which about three years ago, had a very good congregation, and about a hundred and twenty or thirty Members, with a respectable old Minister who had been their *servant* a great many years. The old man, however, died, of course a successor was to be chosen. Several Teachers who were *to let*, preached on "probation," and at length one received "*a Call*," which though by no means a "*unanimous call*," he gladly "*accepted*." And being chosen by a majority of the members, he, of course, took possession of the vacant pulpit, and of the house appropriated to the residence of the Minister, and thereby became entitled to an endowment of twenty pounds per annum, annexed to the Meeting-house,

sion actually locked up her own daughter and the Teacher together alone in a room for a considerable time. But the Teacher being determined to act upon the voluntary principle, still fought shy of his fellow prisoner, and not being able to make his escape from his fair companion in bonds, he took up a book and read till he obtained his liberty. He soon afterwards married another person—the very person whom the Deacon's son was desirous of marrying. So that altogether the Teacher got himself into a very awkward predicament, for it was not to be expected that the Deacon would stomach all this. Nor indeed did he, for he immediately turned round upon the Teacher, began to find fault with him—raised a cabal against him and used his utmost endeavours to get him out of the Meeting-house. In this, however, he could not succeed. He, therefore, with a party whom he influenced, left the Meeting-house and built another not far distant. And such was the animosity that existed between these rival saints, that if they happened to meet on their way to or from their respective Meeting-houses they could scarcely pass without indulging in a little "round abuse" of each other—the result of their "keen hatred," and no equivocal evidence of their superior piety. Thus was verified the truth of Mr. James's remark, that the Deacon of some Dissenting Societies is "the patron of the living, the bible of the Minister, and the wolf of the flock." The above mentioned Deacon finding that he could not be such of one Meeting-house, thought that he would of another ; but, whether he thus procured a husband for his daughter I know not. I should think that as he would not like to be out done a second time, he would take care to make the marriage of his daughter a *sine quâ non* with the Teacher of his new Meeting-house.

upon the condition that a Minister of the Calvinistic persuasion was always the Minister. But the minority were highly dissatisfied; the Minister was what is termed a high Calvinist, or an Antinomian, they, therefore, considered him a usurper, contending that the person who had partly built and endowed the Meeting-house, never intended that such a faith should be promulgated in it. The newly-elected Minister contended that he was of the Calvinistic persuasion, as required, and had been duly elected by a majority of the Members according to the principles of Dissent, and that all was consequently right. The minority left the Meeting-house, and assembled by themselves in another place—a paper war ensued, and the Meeting-house doors were burst open. And the conflicting parties not being able to settle the matter themselves, appealed to the King as the Head of Dissent, to settle it for them, and to determine whether low Calvinism, high Calvinism, or Antinomianism should afterwards be preached in the Meeting-house. The King, as supreme in the Religious causes of Dissent, determined through the medium of his representatives, that low or modern Calvinism should in future be there preached. And having come to this determination, the King, as the Head of Dissent, sent his servants to eject the Minister and the *majority*, some of whom had property in the building, and put the *minority* in peaceable possession of the Meeting-house, Minister's residence, and the endowment, and all this in direct opposition to the principles of Dissent; which require that all matters should be settled by the *majority*, without any foreign interference. Does not this most clearly and decisively prove that the King is the Head of Dissent, as much as he can be of the Church? Is he not in fact more so? for if any Ecclesiastical dispute takes place in the Church, it is settled by the Church herself, without any foreign aid. But these Dissenters went to law, and that before those whom they charitably term "Unbelievers," and "without." Thus they not only

abandoned their Dissenting principles, but in the cant of Dissent, threw off their allegiance to Christ, rejected him as the only Supreme Head of his Church, and constituted a mortal—an “exalted, and all but deified man,” their Supreme Head in his room.

“Should it be pretended,” says Mr. Scales with his usual good sense, “that a Head is requisite in order to unity in the Church and in the Faith, that there may be a Judge for our appeal in doubtful matters, and an authority who may require and ensure uniformity of belief and worship, *we* maintain that *that* head is Christ, that He alone can fulfil that office.”* Now, as the above-mentioned Dissenters found that a Head was requisite, and that they wanted “a Judge for their appeal in their *doubtful matters*,” why did they not act according to Mr. Scales, and instead of going to law, appeal to Christ, who “*alone* can fulfil that office,” in order that as “Judge,” he might settle their “*doubtful matters*” for them? I know not how else to expose the foolery of such ridiculous nonsense, or I would not ask (which I wish to do with the greatest possible reverence,) why did not Christ settle the business for them? Why did they not state their case to Him as the “Judge for their appeal,” who “*alone* could fulfil that office,” and require him to decide their “doubtful matter” for them? They certainly ought to have done so, according to the wisdom and sagacity of the Dissenting Mr. Scales.

Dissenters are always sagely talking about appealing to Christ as their Judge and Supreme Head in all their disputes and “doubtful matters;” but no sooner do they kick up a quarrel, than away they run to the King, and appeal to *him* as their “Judge” and Supreme Head, and thus at once abandon all their ridiculous and nonsensical theorizing; and so far indeed they are perfectly consistent with themselves.

Moreover, if they really do acknowledge the Lord

* Scales, p. 71.

Jesus Christ as their only Law-giver and Ruler, as they pretend they do, why do they not obey him?—why do they not attend to the commands, rules, and institutions which he has revealed in his Holy Word? I have proved in the foregoing letters that they disobey the Word of God, that not one of their Dissenting notions are there to be found, how then can Christ be their Head and Law-giver? All the commands, precepts, institutions, and ordinances of Christ, in short, the whole of the Scriptures of Truth, are made to bend and submit to their “tender consciences,” and to their “private judgment.” These are their idols—these are their rulers—these are their guides, and not Christ; and to these every text of God’s Word, and every generally received opinion of the whole Christian Church must bend. Urge upon them, in opposition to any one of their unscriptural vagaries, some passage of Scripture so clear and so plain, that “the wayfaring man though a fool, cannot err therein;” and “private judgment” steps in and immediately sets it aside, and you will probably be modestly told, “O, but I have very likely quite different ideas upon that passage from what you have; or perhaps from what you ever heard.” O, to be sure! “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.” Thus, with all the spiritual pride imaginable, they set up “conscience,” and “private judgment,” or rather *perverted* judgment, *above* the commands and precepts of Christ, and all the Word of God. Talk of the Pope and Popery; why every Dissenter carries a Pope about within him, and is himself thus as veritable a Pope as ever existed. In short, if the Lord Jesus Christ were their Head and Governor, and only Law-giver, they would obey his Laws, and observe his precepts; but instead of this, they are led away by *will-worship*, and human inventions, and novel traditions, no-where to be found in the only Christian Code—the Word of God; and never either known or heard of in all the known world, till they were broached by Robert Brown, the *head* of Dissent. To his whims,

fancies, novelties, and heresies, they pay implicit obedience, and thus they evidently acknowledge and obey "another Sovereign, Law-giver, and Supreme Head besides Jesus Christ; an authority which commands things which Christ never commanded, which teaches doctrines he never taught, which enjoins terms of communion, and rites of religious worship, which Christ never enjoined."*

I think I have shown, notwithstanding the cant of Dissenters, about the Lord Jesus Christ's being their only Head and Law-giver; that, (as not one of their Dissenting peculiarities are to be found in the Word of God, but are most of them contrary thereto,) they do not obey him as such, and that the King is on earth the Head of Dissent just as much as he is of the Church, and that he is acknowledged to be so by Dissenters themselves, in their appealing to him to settle their disputations and quarrellings. And, indeed, if there be any persons, things, or actions exempt from his authority, how can he be King? If he be not Supreme over all persons, things, and actions within his jurisdiction, where is his Kingship? But this is, of course, to Dissenters, who are Republicans, a matter of no moment whatever. They are the natural enemies of Monarchy, and cannot possibly be otherwise: for if their Democratical principles of Spiritual Government be so excellent, they cannot but consider that they would be equally so, if applied to temporal Government. O, but are not Dissenters very loyal people? O yes, to be sure they are, if *professions* and *occasional appearances* will make them so. But at heart they are, nevertheless, the determined haters of Monarchy and the British Constitution; and if they saw any prospect of overturning them, they would soon appear in their true and proper colours. That, however, would not do at present, they must profess yet longer the warmest attachment to the

King and to Monarchy, in order to prevent suspicion, and the better to succeed in their designs. When conversing, however, with each other on such matters, they hesitate not to avow their true principles, and this, Sir, you know full well. I have repeatedly heard the King and Monarchy spoken of in the most disrespectful terms, and the wicked Oliver Cromwell, and the Commonwealth lauded in terms of the highest approbation, proving at once that they only want the power again to push their own peculiar views, to the destruction of those to whom they are opposed. And as has been well remarked, "should the period ever arrive when there would be a greater number of Dissenters than Churchmen, there is every reason to conclude, that another revolution would be the consequence. 'This seems to me to be inevitable, and the necessary result of the nature of things, and to be generated by the very principles of Dissent. As honest men, who think themselves right, and that their system tends more to advance the Divine glory," (query, their own interest?) "than that from which they Dissent, they would be bound to attempt to establish a different state of things, and alter the whole constitution of the Church and State. Nor can I see how Dissent can be justified on any principle, except such an object be kept in view."* And that such an object is kept in view, is clearly manifest from the circumstance, that Dissenting Teachers are constantly dabbling in *Radical* politics, and using their utmost endeavours, in the true Jesuitical spirit, to forward the ambitious views of their restless faction. This is corroborated by the testimony of one who was himself a Dissenting Teacher of long standing. On Friday, January 27, 1832, Mr. Thos. Mc. Connel, one of the Editors of the *Manchester Courier*, said, before the Magistrates at the New Bailey, in an affair of an

* Reasons for Seceding from the Dissenters and conforming to the Established Church of England, p. 9.

assault received by him, from Mr. Samuel Waldie, his co-editor, "I was a Minister for seventeen years among that class of Dissenters, denominated Independents, but I at length left them, *in consequence* of their mixing up too much of RADICAL politics with their proceedings."* Every person, indeed, who knows any thing at all of the REAL political sentiments of the Dissenters, needs no evidence of this sort to convince him that they are *still* as a body, REPUBLICAN RADICALS, and as it regards the admirable Constitution of this country, *complete levellers*. It may be said, why, then, do they not more generally unite with the Radicals? I answer, for the reasons before stated, because by shewing themselves in their true colours, they would not be able to accomplish their purposes. Were their disloyalty manifest—were their enmity to our excellent institutions apparent, and not concealed under pretensions of loyalty, they are well aware that the Government of the country—"the powers that be," whether Tory or Whig, would treat them with due caution, and be very wary of granting them any favour. But, should the time ever unhappily come, when the Whigs and Radicals shall be the most powerful political parties in the kingdom, and the Dissenters find that they have got all from the Whigs that they are likely to obtain, they will immediately side with the Radicals, and the deserted Whigs will find their old allies their bitterest and most wily opponents. If Dissenters are not Republicans—if they are quite as loyal as they pretend to be, let me ask them an awkward question—Why is Paine's Rights of Man such a favourite work amongst them? Why does it form a part of Dissenting lending libraries? It was some time since, and most probably is at the present moment to be found in the library, kept in the Vestry of the Meeting-house of the late Mr. Parsons, at Leeds. And more than this, this same Mr. Parsons, the Teacher

* Wakefield Journal, Feb. 3, 1832.

of a large Dissenting Congregation in the important town of Leeds, was at some pains to recommend that work to his Members and Hearers. This eminent Dissenting Teacher, in fact, warmly recommended the "Rights of Man"—a work of Mr. Thomas Paine, the Deist, and of course, Mr. Parsons was a very loyal man. A son of Mr. Parsons, is now a Teacher of Spiritual Democracy at York, and another of his sons, once a Dissenting Teacher at Halifax, and afterwards, for a short time at London, is now, I understand, the editor of an ultra Radical Leeds Newspaper. And, indeed, if Mr. Parsons was himself such an admirer of the principles of Tom Paine, what can we expect his son to be? And what can we expect his Members and Congregation to be? Of this, we are not altogether left in the dark, for one of his Members, no less a personage than Mr. Baines, junior editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, when haranguing the mob on a certain occasion, gave as a specimen of his loyalty, **THREE GROANS** for the **QUEEN**. Yes, "**THREE GROANS**" for Queen Adelaide—the virtuous and amiable Consort of King William the Fourth. This Mr. Baines, is one of those who are of that "kingdom which is not of this world," a joined Member of a Dissenting Church, and no doubt a very pious gentleman. He has, also, a very "*weak*" and a very "*tender* conscience," and takes "the Word of God as his only rule of faith and practice," and is consequently, very careful to "render *honour* to whom *honour* is due,"* as well as to "Fear God, and **HONOUR THE KING**,"† which, I suppose, in the "*liberty of his conscience*," and in the exercise of his "*private judgment*," he thought was most effectually done *by insulting the Queen*.

A Dissenting Minister, of some eminence, also, who is at present not many miles from London, after the rancour of his political sentiments had been con-

* Romans xiii. 7.

+ 1 Pe er ii. 17.

siderably modified, candidly confessed to a friend of mine, that when he left the Dissenting Academy, he was, as to his insidious designs, and seditious sentiments, in opposition to the "Throne, and the Altar," to use his own words, "AS BLACK AS HELL." And what else can we suppose his fellow students would be? It is at those hotbeds of Dissent and Schism—the Dissenting Academies, that the political principles of Dissenting Teachers are generally brought to perfection. In them is nourished "The cockle of rebellion, insolence, and sedition."

And let any candid and impartial man only read with attention, "Principles of Dissent, by Thomas Scales," and he will not fail to be convinced that the whole tendency of that book, and of almost every page of it is decidedly to Democracy, levelling, and disloyalty, and (I will add) Infidelity. "It is," Mr. Scales says, "a flagrant violation of the LAW OF NATURE," (not of the Bible it seems,) "to wrest from any man his original and personal right to freedom—an execrable act of tyranny and injustice on his part who attempts—

‘ So to aspire
Above his brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not given.
MAN OVER MEN
HE MADE NOT LORD: such title to himself
Reserving, HUMAN LEFT FROM HUMAN FREE.’”*

In proof of such levelling sentiments, he quotes the following passage, which in his "private judgment," and according to his "tender conscience," he undoubtedly thinks quite to the point, and quite consonant with his "*law of nature*."—"God hath made of one blood, all nations of men that dwell on all the face of the earth."† It is perfectly useless to say, that this passage of Scripture is neither used nor applied in the Sacred Book, in the sense in which Mr. Scales has used, and applied, or rather "*wrested*" it.

* Scales 32.

† See Scales 36, and Acts xvii. 26.

For it is matter of positive fact, that God absolutely *has made* "man lord over men." He placed Moses and Aaron over the children of Israel, and took David from the sheep-folds, and made him their King; and yet, I presume, that at the very time when he thus acted, he knew that he had "made of one blood all nations of men." The loyal Apostle has also declared, that "the powers that be, are ordained of God," and has commanded "every soul" to be subject to them. And the Prophet Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "The God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory,"* and yet I suppose, that the Almighty, when he gave Nebuchadnezzar dominion over his fellow-creatures, was very well aware that he had "made of one blood all nations of men." Can it be for a moment imagined that the all-wise and blessed God has acted in contradiction to his own positive declarations? What dreadful havoc do men make of the Word of God by making one passage appear to contradict another! And when viewed in the light of Teachers and Guides of others, and as men pretending to pay greater respect and veneration to God's Word than any other persons, how forcibly is one struck with the remark of our blessed Saviour to men of a similar cast in his day, "they be blind leaders of the blind."† One is at a loss to imagine how such men as Mr. Scales can dare to assert, in opposition to such numerous facts recorded in the Scriptures to the contrary, that God has not made man lord over men. No wonder that Popery, irreligion, and Infidelity are so much on the increase, when the Holy Scriptures are made such a handle of. Mr. Scales's book, indeed, is of such a nature as to serve well for a kind of "short cut" from Christianity to Infidelity, and might have been very properly entitled, "An Easy Introduction to Tom Paine's Age of Reason."

The tendency of Mr. James's book, I am glad to

* Daniel, ii. 37.

† Matth. xv. 14.

say, is nothing so bad. Mr. James, however, gives us to understand very clearly, of what description his politics are. He says, with great piety and equal loyalty, that "there are seasons when a Christian (of course he means a Dissenter,) may PIOUSLY lift his hand against the Government of his country."* Dissenters are, of course, themselves to be the judges as to the seasons *when* they are to adopt such a *pious practice*. And as the Scriptures are their only rule of faith and practice, they can undoubtedly tell us where they are there commanded so *piously* to break God's command, "Honour the King;" and also where they there find our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles, by precept or example, sanctioning such *pious* conduct.† From such assertions, however, we find that Dissenters are fully prepared as soon as they have any prospect of success, to carry on once again their godly trade of "war and saintship," and *piously* to act over again the deeds of their wicked rebellion, though "black as hell," and to overturn the Government and institutions of the coun-

* James, 53.

† If Dissenters thought the Blessed Saviour worthy of imitation, they would follow his example as recorded in the four last verses of the 17th of St. Matthew. We there find, that instead of resisting the laws of his country, and causing disturbance, uproar, and confusion, he willingly and cheerfully paid Church Rates to those who requested them of him, although his poverty was such that he was obliged to work a miracle to obtain money for the purpose. In order, however, to get over this, as an example, it is sometimes said, that what our Saviour paid was not a religious tax, but a civil one. But this is directly and properly contradicted by a learned Dissenting Commentator on the words: "He says,—this was not the Roman tax, nor tribute on any civil account, but the half shekel for RELIGIOUS SERVICE." (Vide Dr Gill in loco.) And although our Lord and exemplar proved to Peter that he had no right and was not obliged to pay it, he yet said to him—"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money, that take and give unto them for me and thee." On these words the afore-mentioned Dissenting Dr. Gill, well remarks, "Though Christ could have maintained his right of exemption from payment, by such strong and clear reasons and arguments, yet he chose to forego it, lest any should be offended with him, and look upon him as a transgressor of the law; one that had no regard to the temple, and slighted the worship and service of it, and so be prejudiced against him and his doctrines; which, by the way, may teach us to be careful to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, or the Church of God, though it may be to our own disadvantage, when the honour and interest of religion lie at stake. This is following the example of Christ." Which modern political Dissenters are very careful to avoid.

try, that they may erect upon their ruins their wished for Republic. Is it not, then, the imperative duty of every Englishman, who "Fears God, and Honours the King,"—who loves his Country and its Constitution, to use his utmost endeavours to expose the villainy of faction, whose political and religious principles have ever been defended by impudence, reproach, clamour, and falsehood, and whose zeal for the aggrandizement of their own sect, will never cool till they have blotted out the very names of Church and King from under heaven. It was wisely observed by King James, "No Bishop, no King," and the remark contains a great deal more truth than many people are willing to acknowledge. The Scriptures imperatively and unconditionally command and enforce, and Episcopacy naturally generates, loyalty to the King, and submission to the powers that be. It is just as absurd to talk of a disloyal Episcopalian, as it is of a religious Atheist. If people are disobedient to their Spiritual Governors, they will never be obedient to their Temporal Governors. Episcopacy and Monarchy will ever stand or fall together. On the other hand, Dissent and Monarchy can never coalesce or stand together. Dissent is naturally opposed to Monarchy, and cannot be otherwise. Its very principles naturally generate, and ever must generate disloyalty and disaffection to a King, and insubordination and rebellion to any form of Government that does not square with the Dissenting notions of Democracy. Dissenters do sometimes, to be sure, boast of their loyalty, but just as a criminal asserts his innocence—in such a way that the very manner of doing it is only calculated to confirm suspicion. But actions always speak louder than words; why do not Dissenting Teachers, in Sermons from their pulpits and otherwise, enforce the duty of loyalty upon their followers? I have heard hundreds of Sermons preached by Dissenters, but never one upon that subject. But both in public and private, I have heard numerous anecdotes, observations, and insinuations,

tending directly to disloyalty, and the breach of that positive command, "Honour the King." And why do they not obey the injunction of St Paul, and pray "for Kings, and for all that are in authority" under him. The late Mr. Abraham Booth, an eminent Dissenting Teacher, at London, would never pray for the King (George the Third,) at all. And it is a well known fact, that a great many Dissenting Teachers follow his example, and those who act otherwise, only do so occasionally, which manifests their disinclination to obey the Apostolic command at all. And, indeed, nothing of this kind can be surprising, when we recollect that they teach their Disciples that insurrection and rebellion are *pious* duties—that they may "*piously* lift their hands against the Government of their country." This is the very same infernal doctrine that prevailed in the time of the Dissenting rebellion under the *pious* Cromwell.

The sum of the whole matter is simply this, Churchmen believe, according to the Scriptures, that the fountain of all power and authority is God. Dissenters believe that it is the people. In this lies all the difference. For as faith is the foundation of all works, these two opposite points of belief, influence their respective adherents to the performance of contrary actions. And whenever Dissenters boast of their loyalty, they only proclaim their own inconsistency, and encourage the belief that they do so merely for the purpose of lulling suspicions, and thereby forwarding their ambitious projects. And from what I know, from abundant experience of the political principles of Dissenters, I would, for my own part, just as soon hear an Atheist boast of his religion, or a libertine of his virtue, as a Dissenter of his loyalty.

I am, Sir, your's, &c.

L. S. E.

LETTER XIV.

ON THE PRETENDED PRINCIPLE OF DISSENT
—THAT THE WORD OF GOD IS THE ONLY
RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE.

SIR,

THIS letter, which shall terminate my present correspondence with you, shall contain a few remarks in reference to your perpetually reiterated assertion, that “the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice,”—that “the Scripture is your only standard in all matters of religion.” I need not produce quotations in proof of this—it is well known, that scarcely a publication is put forth by any one of your sect, but what abounds in assertions to this amount in almost every form and variety of which the English language will admit. So much, indeed, is this the case, that persons neither acquainted with the subject nor with your characters and modes of proceeding, as Dissenters, except through Dissenting mediums, are apt to suppose that you are the only persons on the face of the earth who pay any regard to the Word of God; and that the Church of England rejects the Scriptures altogether, and receives as her Articles of Faith, nothing forsooth but a few crude legendary notions culled from the nonsensical writings of some old doting Churchmen, called “Fathers,” who never even dreamt of “*this*

enlightened age," or of "*the march of intellect.*" And this is not only craftily insinuated, but as much is sometimes even asserted, although those who assert it are well aware of its falsehood, unless they have heard and repeated it so often that they have themselves been led to believe it.

The Church declares openly to the world in her sixth Article, that the "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." And to say that the Church does require any man to believe as necessary to salvation some things which are neither read in Holy Scripture nor can be proved thereby, and that she thus violates her own Article, is a malignant and wilful falsehood, fabricated in the true spirit of "*KEEN HATRED and round abuse of the Church,*" for the *pure* purpose of "*keeping up pure attachment to Dissenting principles.*" That some few practices of the Church, in themselves merely simple and non-essential, are not expressly commanded in the Word of God, is freely acknowledged, but that they are forbidden by it, or are in the least degree contrary to it, remains yet to be proved. As the Word of God does not furnish us with express and specific directions for every particular necessary to uphold religion and the worship of God, the Church is absolutely obliged to appoint and ordain such ceremonies and circumstantialia as are necessary for that purpose, taking care, as she most scrupulously has done, "*that nothing be ordained against God's Word,*"* and that "*all things be done decently and in order.*"† And besides, although you condemn the Church for adopting some few indifferent things not expressly commanded in the Scriptures, you yourselves, as will presently be shewn, do the very same, and thus con-

* Article 34.

† Cor. xiv. 40.

demn yourselves out of your own mouths. And to this you add the wickedness of positively denying it, continually and falsely affirming, as you do, that "the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice : " thus " beguiling unstable souls,"* " and by good words and fair speeches deceiving the hearts of the simple."†

Moreover also, where is even the common honesty of those Dissenters who are continually insinuating, that the Church does not take the Word of God as her only rule of faith and practice, which they, with their tender consciences, know perfectly well to be a malicious falsehood? Mr. Scales, of course a very pious man, insinuates this wilful and impudent falsehood in many places in his hollow and declamatory book. I call it a wilful falsehood, because he could not but know it to be false. This is undeniably evident, from the quotations which he has himself given from the works of standard Churchmen : for those very quotations at once condemn him, by flatly contradicting his own wicked insinuations. The first quotation he has given, is the authorised and unanimous voice of the Church. It is from the sixth Article, and is this. " Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought necessary to salvation."‡ He then gives the following annotation of Archdeacon Welchman :— " The Holy Scripture contains all things which relate either to faith or practice, beyond which God requires nothing of us." With these positive avowals of the Church before his face, with what conscience or decency could he insinuate that the Church believes to the contrary? What honest-hearted upright man does not detest such pious fraud and holy tricking? I know that Dissenters confess, that " *A KEEN HATRED, and now and then A LITTLE ROUND ABUSE OF THE CHURCH,*

* 2 Peter, ii. 14.

† Romans, xvi. 18.

‡ Scales, p. 46.

ARE REQUISITE TO KEEP UP PURE ATTACHMENT TO DISSENTING principles ;” but making every allowance for this—granting that Dissent cannot be “ kept up” without *keen hatred and round abuse* of the Church, yet it is really too bad to belie the Church upon a subject of such vital importance. Common prudence, too, might have forbidden it, for nothing can be clearer than the quotations which Mr. Scales has cited in his book, and all the world knows that his insinuations are utterly false.*

* It is astonishing to what lengths against the Church the enmity of Dissenting Teachers will lead them, and what unblushingly impudent lies they do not hesitate to utter against her. One of these gentlemen when preaching, a few weeks ago, a set sermon against the Church, told his hearers for their godly edification, and as an instance of the wickedness of the Church, that the Archbishop of York suspended one of his clergymen in the West-Riding of Yorkshire, for the four following things:—1. Because he was a Calvinist. 2. Because he preached extempore. 3. Because he took the bible into the pulpit!!! And 4. because he preached in private houses. Now a gentleman who happened to be present when the fellow related this circumstance, suspecting it to be false, wrote to him immediately afterwards, requesting to be informed where and when the circumstance took place. But although the note was written in the most civil and courteous manner, the teacher would not answer it. The reason is self-evident. He knew that he had told a falsehood, and therefore could not substantiate it.

Another Dissenting Teacher who sat opposite me when coming down from London by coach, on the first of last July, related the following anecdote, which he said was told him by a friend in Suffolk, on whose word the greatest reliance might be placed. Speaking of the facility of obtaining Holy Orders,—he said there was a gentleman, named Philips, at Winfarthing, near Diss, in Norfolk, who had three sons, Will, Tom, and John. Will, he made a lawyer, and Tom a doctor ; but as for John, he was such a blockhead he knew not what to do with him at all. However, he at length considered to make him a clergyman. John was consequently educated accordingly, and sent to the Bishop of Norwich for ordination, taking with him from his father a letter to his Lordship, requesting him not to ask John any hard questions “ But,” said the Dissenting Teacher, here, stopping short, “ the matter is really so discreditable to the parties concerned, that I had better not relate it.” O said I, let us have it, for had you not intended to tell it, you would not have begun it. “ Well,” said he, “ as you wish to hear it, I will proceed.” He then went on to say, that

But again, after stating it as a principle of Dissent, that the "Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice," he says, "I am much more anxious here to corroborate and support the principles of Non-conformity, by the aid of those who rank as the defenders, and are justly admired as the ornaments of the English Church, than by multiplying quotations from writers on *our own side of the question*."* Now, what is here evidently implied? What is the meaning of the sentence? What is the naked and plain English of it? Why, in the first place, he has, what he is pleased to term, though most unjustly, "a principle of Non-conformity to corroborate and support." And what is that pretended principle of Non-conformity? Why, that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice.

on John's appearing for examination, the Bishop having read the letter from John's father, said, "Well, Mr. Philips, your father wishes me to ask you no hard questions, I will attend to his request. You recollect there was such a man as Noah, and that he had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now who was Japheth's father?" John, of course, as the tale went, could not tell, and was, therefore, sent home without ordination, for which John's father was much displeased, and, in blaming him said, "Now, you blockhead, there is Mr. Philips, of Winfarthing, and he has three sons, Will, Tom, and John, now who is John's father." "Why, Mr. Philips, of Winfarthing, to be sure," replied John. "Well, then," said the father, "why could you not answer the Bishop's question?" At the next ordination John went again, when the Bishop said, "Well, Mr. Philips, I will ask you the same question as before, Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, now who was Japheth's father?" "Why, Mr. Philips of Winfarthing, to be sure my Lord," replied John. Notwithstanding all this, however, John was ordained this time, according to the tale of the Dissenting Teacher, who took occasion to repeat that, incredible as it might appear, there needed to be no doubt as to its truth, for having been told it by a very pious friend who knew all about it, he was perfectly satisfied that it was true. Such are specimens of the creditable and honourable weapons with which the Church is assailed by those truth telling and anecdote-relating gentry, the Dissenting Teachers. I mentioned the anecdote to a lady shortly after I left the coach, and she immediately replied, why, I recollect reading that above thirty years ago, in Joe Miller's Jest-book, or some such work as that.

—And how is he “anxious to corroborate and support” it? Why *not* by writers on his “*own side of the question*,” but by writers on the *opposite side* of the question. But who are the writers on his “*own side of the question*?” Why those who hold the principle that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice, that is, Dissenters. Well, but who are the writers on the *other side* of the question, by whose “aid” he is so “anxious to corroborate and support the principles of Non-conformity?” Why, those who are opposed to that principle—certainly. And who are they? Why, Churchmen, to be sure. Does he mean to say, then, that Churchmen do not take the Word of God as their only rule of faith and practice? Certainly he does, if there be any meaning at all in what he says. But why did he not, instead of stating it indirectly and subtilly, act like an honest man and express it directly and clearly? Why, because he knew that he was uttering a wicked falsehood; and being ashamed to send it forth in its native deformity, he has varnished it over, and craftily chosen rather to insinuate and imply it than to state it openly. This, indeed, would have been too honest and upright a course, and would not so well have suited the purposes of the Holy and pious man—his “tender conscience” would not have been satisfied by such a mode of proceeding.

But the craft and falsehood of Mr. Scales’s insinuations are further manifest, from the circumstance of his stating the principle, that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice, *as a principle of Dissent*; that is, as a principle on account of which Dissenters are induced to Dissent from the Church: by which it is implied that the Church does not hold that principle, for if she does hold it, how can it be a principle of Dissent—how can it afford a reason for Dissenting from her? But that the Church positively and unequivocally does hold the Word of God to be her only rule of faith and practice, and considers it as a fundamental Article of Faith, I need not attempt to prove,

for that is abundantly manifest from the very quotations which Mr. Scales has himself cited from some of her standard works. He has, of course, jesuitically quoted them for a very different purpose—a purpose, indeed, which he well knew they neither do nor can be honestly made to serve. He has quoted them craftily, intending them to “corroborate and support” what he terms a “principle of Non-conformity;” whereas, he was, at the same time, perfectly aware that their authors hated Non-conformity as a dangerous sin, simply because it has no foundation in the Word of God, and because it does NOT hold as a “principle” that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice. And I could easily shew, that some, if not all of them, have written against Non-conformity, and have most strenuously opposed it as contrary to God’s Word, and would have detested the idea of their writings being quoted pretendedly in proof of such wickedness. And it is really difficult to imagine any thing more depraved and false than the insinuation, that they “corroborate and support” the principle, that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice *as a principle of Dissent*. For, fearless of contradiction, I deny in the strongest possible terms, that they prove any thing of the kind. They prove undeniably that it is a fundamental principle of the Church, and they cannot, with all the “characteristic sophistry,” and subtle jesuitry of Mr. Scales, be made to prove any thing else, much less that it is a principle of Dissent. Why then, it may be asked, has he given the quotations at all? I answer, for the very worst of purposes. For the whole matter when unravelled out, simply amounts to this—he insinuates that the Church does *not* take the Word of God as her only rule of faith and practice, and that *because she does not do so*, Dissenters take it up as *a principle of Dissent*, or as a reason for Dissenting from the Church, and that this pretended principle of Dissent is, *as such*, “corroborated and supported” even by some of the best of Churchmen, who thus condemn the

Church, and save him and his Dissenting brotherhood the trouble of doing so by writers on his "*own side of the question.*" And I leave any honest and impartial man to say, whether insinuations more unfair, dishonest, and shamelessly unjust, can be found in all the annals of theological controversy, even those of Popish Jesuits not excepted. When, however, we recollect that Mr. Scales has not hesitated to avow his belief, that "*the Great God himself does not force our faith and obedience,*"* that is, that he is not forced to obey even "*the Great God himself,*" we shall no longer wonder at any conduct Mr. Scales may think proper to manifest, however iniquitous that conduct may be. For if "*the Great God himself does not force his faith and obedience,*" he certainly can be under no *obligation* to believe or obey him, and consequently whatever he does he cannot commit sin.

The Churchmen from whom Mr. Scales has quoted, are Bishop Jewel, Bishop Stillingfleet, Bishop Beveridge, Archdeacon Daubeney and Chillingworth. And after giving a quotation from Archdeacon Daubeney, in amount that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice, Mr. Scales says, "To those who are aware of the high Church principles of the late Archdeacon of Bath, these opinions will appear very extraordinary and unaccountable."† Here, again, he evidently insinuates, that although the Archdeacon has said that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice, he did not believe it, and that his real opinions were quite the contrary, or how or why should such an assertion appear so "very extraordinary and unaccountable?" I confess that such conduct on the part of Mr. Scales, as a Dissenter, appears to me neither "very extraordinary" nor "unaccountable." Nevertheless, he would have acted a little more honestly had he produced quotations from the Archdeacon, showing *wherein* he has contradicted himself, and *wherein* his

* Scales, p. 39.

† Scales, 59.

opinion that the Word of God is the only rule of faith and practice, does really "appear very extraordinary and unaccountable." But this Mr. Scales would probably have found to be a difficult matter. For, I repeat, that he well knows that all the above admirable writers believed and took the Bible as their only rule of faith and practice, and that it is an avowed fundamental Article of the whole Church. He also knows that they were strenuously opposed to Non-conformity and Dissent in every shape, and have written powerfully and unanswerably against it, simply because they found it condemned in the Word of God, their only rule of faith and practice.

But, however, Sir, as you are everlastingly reiterating that the Word of God is your only rule of faith and practice, and are ever very anxious that people should believe that every article of your faith, and every part of your practice, is expressly commanded, authorised, and sanctioned by the Word of God, and to be found expressly and particularly stated therein—let us see how matters stand in this respect—let me ask you a few pointed questions in reference to this subject. Tell us then, good Sir, in the first place, where the Scripture commands Churches to elect their own Ministers, or where it is even mentioned in the Word of God (your only pretended rule recollect,) that a Church elected its Minister? Now let us have no evasion—no equivocation—no twisting or shuffling—give us a direct answer—point us to the book, and to the chapter, and the verse. If you were to ask me to point out to you the book, chapter, and verse, where it is said that Ministers were *otherwise* appointed, that is, appointed by Bishops, I would tell you at once, directly and distinctly. Let us, therefore, just for once have a little honesty from you. But, again, you have Colleges for educating young men for Dissenting Teachers, or as a Dissenter terms them—"beardless youths" and "pulpit fops." Where is the Scripture for such Colleges? Where does the Word of God mention your Divinity

Tutors ? or your Classical Tutors ? or authorise their drilling your young Divines in *English grammar and teaching them to SPELL* ? Where do we there read of the “Dissenting Interest”—your “Church-meetings,” or your infamous Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society ? Your Teachers modestly take to themselves the title of Reverend—where is the Scripture for it ? Where for your L.L.D’s. and D.D’s., &c. You unite in opposition to the Church with Papists, Arians, Socinians, Free-thinkers, Deists, Infidels, and Atheists ; where does the Scripture sanction such an ungodly practice ? Where is the Scripture for “Calls,” and “unanimous Calls ?” Your Ministers drive bargains with their people, to serve them as their hirelings for so much a year—where is the Scripture for such a practice ? Mr. James says, that the practices of Dissenters in electing their Ministers are numerous ; are they all Scriptural—is one of them Scriptural ? If the practice of your Churches of electing their own Ministers be Scriptural, why did not St. Paul send the lists of the qualifications requisite in candidates for the Ministry, contained in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, to THE CHURCHES of Ephesus and Crete, *instead of to single individual Ministers* ? If Congregations are independent, and have a right independently to elect their own Teachers, where was the propriety or even common sense in St. Paul saying to Timothy, “Lay hands suddenly on no man ?” What right, according to your Dissenting principles, had Timothy to charge other Ministers what doctrines to preach ?* What right had he to receive accusations against Elders, and to sit as Judge over them, and to rebuke them ?† St. Paul commanded Titus to rebuke some Ministers sharply ; but according to the principles of Congregational Independency, what right had Titus to rebuke them at all ?‡ And what right had he to reject heretics—why was it not left to be done by the voice of the

* See 1 Tim. i. 3.

† See 1 Tim. v. 19, 20.

‡ See Titus, i. 13.

Churches? * You practice the baptism of Infants,—where is the Scripture for it? You *name* them at their baptism,—where is the Scripture for it? You administer the Lord's Supper, as you call it, to females,—where is the Scripture for it? You use red wine and *leavened* bread at your Sacrament, and collect money immediately after,—but where is the Scripture for such practices? Christ administered the Supper in an upper room late at night, and immediately after a full meal, why do not you? Christ and his Apostles reclined on couches at the time, where does the Word of God sanction your mode of sitting? Christ *sat* when he preached, why do you stand? † Where is the Scripture for your practice of preaching from a single text? Where for your wearing gowns, cassocks, and bands? Dissenting Churches sometimes quarrel and fight, is such conduct Scriptural? Where does the Scripture say any thing about your idols—liberty of conscience—tender conscience—or private judgment? Where is liberty of conscience there defined and determined? And where is the line of distinction between liberty of conscience and licentiousness there drawn? If the Word of God *be* your only rule of faith and practice, tell us where it says any thing about your mode or modes of admitting persons into fellowship with you, either by letter, by *proxy*, or by personal appearance at your Church-meetings? What part of God's Word authorises your Churches to depute two of their members to wait upon candidates for Church Membership a month previously to their admission, to take the size and dimensions, and *weakness* of their consciences? St. Paul commanded the Corinthians ‡—"Greet ye one another with a holy kiss?" Why do not *all* of you follow the same practice? § Where is the Scripture for your County or District Associations, and County

* See Titus, iii. 10.

† Luke iv. 20.

‡ Cor. xvi. 20.

§ Mr. John Walker, formerly a Fellow of the University of Dublin, died last week in that city. He was expelled from College upwards of thirty years ago, for the heterodoxy of his opinions on subjects of Church Government and doctrine, and set up a Church of his own in Dublin, where he

Unions ? Why are Congregational Independents sometimes called Brownists ? And where was Congregational Independency before the days of Robert Brown, your father and founder, who lived only about two hundred and fifty years ago ? The Dissenting Eclectic Review says that you have amongst you—spurious Congregational Churches—Ultra-Independent Churches—Polypus Churches—and Old Sarum and Gattton Churches. Are Churches of these sorts to be found in the Word of God, your only rule ? Where is the Scripture for your ceremonies of opening your Meeting-houses, anniversaries, and seat-rents ? Where is the Scripture for your beginning your service at half-past ten, and at two, or half-past two on Sundays ? And where, for your formal mode of conducting your services by singing first, praying second ; singing third, preaching next ; then singing again, and then concluding with prayer ? Where is the Scripture which authorises you to sing Watts's Hymns, or Watts's Whims, as they have been termed ? Mr. James talks of prayers outrageously long and dull, are they Scriptural ? (By-the-bye, the Pharisees made *long* prayers.) Where is the Scripture for *your* extemporary prayers ? What are they but human inventions and will-worship ? Where is the Scripture for your Form of Burial ? Where

preached the strongest doctrines of Calvin, without the slightest qualification. But that which attracted most attention to his synagogue was a schism upon a point of discipline, which vexed the body about eighteen years ago. St. Paul, at the conclusion of one of his Epistles, says, "Greet ye one another with a holy kiss." And Mr. Walker, upon that slight warranty, introduced the promiscuous practice of LIP-WORSHIP into his Congregation, every Member of which, at entrance and exit, saluted the person who happened to occupy the next seat. The practice went on SMACK SMOOTH for some time, until a new married lady, not of the initiated, was greeted after the usual form by a BLACKSMITH. A terrible hubbub ensued, in which the kissers took one side and the anti-kissers another. Ultimately, the latter had to go to the wall. After that, Walker went to London, where he got up a small retinue of disciples ; but not possessing any of the qualities of a popular orator, he failed to gather a mob after his heels. He had some followers, however, most of them wealthy persons, and possessed sufficient influence to procure an Act of Parliament to be passed, exempting them from taking an oath. They are styled 'Separatists in that Bill, but in all their private acts and edicts, they modestly entitle themselves 'The Church of God.'"—YORK CHRONICLE, THURSDAY, Nov. 14, 1833.

also for your preaching Funeral Sermons? You require persons desirous of becoming Members of your Churches to give you what you call an "experience;" upon what part of God's word is such a practice founded? Your Deacons, and not your Ministers, administer your Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to all your Members; where is the Scripture for such a practice? Where is, indeed, the Scripture for your "*Deacons*," as you term them, or for the office which they hold? Mr. James talks of Dissenting "*Lord Deacons*,"—*biting Deacons*, and *worrying Deacons*; where are such animals mentioned in Scripture? He also speaks of the existence of "*spiritual kidnappers*"* amongst Dissenters; is their office *Scriptural* as well as *spiritual*? He also says, "What is the Deacon of some of our Dissenting communities—but the *Bible of the Minister*, the *patron of the living*, and the *wolf of the flock*,"† where, however, is the Scripture for such an officer? Mr. James says, "that in some cases the *unscriptural* plan of Committees has been resorted to‡ by Dissenters for managing the affairs of their Churches. I quote his second edition, but in his fifth edition I find Mr. James has left out the word "*unscriptural*," so that I suppose he has now discovered such "*Committees*" to be *Scriptural*; I therefore ask, where they are mentioned in the only rule—the Word of God? He also says, that "it is often said" (by Dissenters) "that the duty of the Deacon's office is to serve tables; the table of the Lord, the table of the Minister, and the table of the poor."§ But, says he, "I *deny* the statement, and affirm, that the table of the poor is the Deacon's appropriate and exclusive duty;" now which opinion is *Scriptural*? Is either of them? Mr. James speaks of various officers of Dissenting Churches, such

* James, p. 125.—Some Dissenters say now, that "it is a most unfortunate thing that ever Mr. James published that book," meaning his "*Church-Member's Guide*," as he terms it. And I have no doubt, that Mr. James himself has sincerely regretted its publication too, since the appearance of Mr. Cawood's admirable pamphlet.

‡ James, 146.

§ James, 146.

† James, 147.

as "Lord-Deacons" and "Leading-Members,"—"Committees" and "Chairmen,"—"Presidents" and "Privy-Councillors,"—"Trustees" and "Treasurers;"* where is the Scripture for them? Mr. James very *loyally*, and very piously says, that "a Christian may *piously* lift his hand against the Government of his country;" where is there a passage in the Word of God to sanction such a loyal and *pious* practice? St. Paul commands Christians to pray "for Kings and all that are in authority,"† and "to be SUBJECT to principalities and powers, to OBEY Magistrates;"‡ reconcile these positive and *unconditional* commands of God with Mr. James's loyal assertion? You say that National Religious Establishments are wrong and contrary to Scripture; is such an opinion Scriptural? Produce a passage proving it to be so? O, say you, Christ says, "My kingdom is not of this world." Granted; but did Christ make use of those words in opposition to the union of Church and State as were then existing in Judea, where he then was? And if he did not, what right have you to use them in such a sense? Or rather, what right have you to pervert them to such a purpose—a purpose for which you dare not say that Christ ever intended them? Was the National Religious Establishment of the Jews wrong? If not, why may it not be taken for a precedent? Was there anything in it typical or ceremonial? If there was, of what was it typical? If there was not, why is not its principle still binding as a precedent? Where is the Scripture to the contrary? You say that Kings and Governors have no right to interfere in religious matters; where is the Scripture for such an impious notion? If they are only to interfere in civil matters, DRAW THE LINE OF DEMARCATION AND DISTINCTION BETWEEN WHAT IS RELIGIOUS AND WHAT IS CIVIL, that Kings and Governors, and others, may know what is civil and

* See James, p.p. 147, 250, 195, 186, 152, 214, 220, 150.

† 1 Tim. ii. 2.

‡ Titus, iii. 1.

what is religious, and what they may interfere in and what they may not? Would God have established religion amongst the Jews if such an establishment had not been best adapted for the spiritual welfare of that people? And if it was best for such a purpose, can a better be adopted?—and Scripturally adopted? Is a National Religious Establishment in and of itself sinful? If it be, how do you exculpate the Almighty? Of what kingdom was the *pious* Mr. Scales, when hurrying up and down the county of York on electioneering business, and where is the Scripture for such practice? When the Dissenting, and, of course, pious Messrs. Scales and Hamilton, of Leeds, meet at political dinners and at other times, and sit to hear *songs, glees, catches*, &c. of what kingdom are they? and what part of Scripture sanction their lending their pious ears to such profane rubbish? (Do they join in concert on such pious occasions?) Dissent and the State are united in the South Sea Islands, where is the Scripture for such a union? Mr. Scales says, “**THE GREAT GOD HIMSELF DOES NOT FORCE OUR FAITH AND OBEDIENCE;**” is this true? is it *Scriptural?* is it even MORAL, good Sir? The Eclectic Review, a Dissenting periodical, says, that “**PURE attachment to Dissenting principles, REQUIRES to be kept up in minds of a certain class by a KEEN HATRED, and now and then a little ROUND ABUSE OF THE CHURCH.**” Where is there, good Sir, a single passage of God’s Holy Word sanctioning the exercise of KEEN HATRED and ROUND ABUSE?

Now, if the Word of God *really* be as you affirm it is, the only rule of your faith and practice, you will be able to answer all these questions very readily. I could have considerably augmented their number, but I fancy you will find those which I have stated to be quite as numerous as you will be disposed to reply to. I may, however, just ask one more, and that is, *do you think that you can by any possibility answer them at all?*

I really think it will, at least, admit of a doubt, and that you will find it to be no easy task, if not an "EVER-LASTING TASK." As, however, your principles—your boasted Dissenting principles—are at stake, answer them you must, or as an honest man for ever abandon your pretended "principles of Dissent."

I will add no more, but simply state, in concluding this correspondence, that at its commencement I had no idea of its reaching to such an extent; but in prosecuting my enquiries in reference to the subjects treated of, and applying my thoughts to them, I felt that I could not otherwise do them justice. And I cannot but again say, that I feel inexpressibly thankful that I ever took them into consideration at all. Instead of being more firmly established in the principles of Dissent, as I fully expected when I began my examination, I am grateful that I have been led to abandon them altogether, and to embrace a system which I am now, as the preceding pages will evince, fully convinced has God for its author, and his Word for its defence. And I only wish and pray that every Dissenter would lay aside his prejudices, and with an upright heart and impartial mind, take the whole subject into his serious consideration; for I am perfectly satisfied that, with the blessing of God, without which nothing is available, similar consequences would inevitably succeed, and he would daily and hourly feel thankful that he ever adapted such a course, and for the results that had so happily followed.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

And sincere Well-wisher,

L. S. E.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Dr. Cox had the extreme modesty to assert at the Second Annual Meeting of that true mirror of Dissenting excellencies and purity, the "Society for Promoting Ecclesiastical Knowledge," that Dissenters were "ALREADY PURIFIED." The Doctor, by the way, is a rank Pluralist, he is the Teacher of a Dissenting Congregation at Hackney—Librarian of the Infidel London University, and one of the Secretaries to the above Society. He is frequently called "*the Five Pound Doctor*," from the circumstance, I presume, of his Diploma having been purchased for that sum. Whether the *learned* L.L.D. purchased his title himself, or whether some *friend* did him the high honour or not, I cannot exactly say. However, this may be, he said at the above Meeting, "let all fall that is not supported there,"—pointing to the New Testament. Now his Doctorship, his Infidel Librarianship, and his Secretaryship, pray are they *supported* by the New Testament? Is there any thing of the kind there mentioned; perhaps, the Learned Doctor will condescend to point out to us where?

No. II.

As we are continually hearing so much about Dissenting purity, and about Dissenting Churches, being Churches of Saints, and their Ministers, holy and pious men, I think it proper to state, at length, the fact here alluded to, as well as those which follow in the Appendix, that it may not be thought that I have alluded to facts which never existed; and, also, that the public may be enabled to judge of the foundation of the boast about the present purity of the sect of Congregational Independents. The fact alluded to is this, the people had just struck a bargain with the "beardless youth," who was then their Teacher, and who had just arrived from one of the Dissenting Academies. He had agreed to be their hired *servant*, and to let them have the full use and benefit of his services for the sum

which they had agreed to pay. Proud of his new situation, this "beardless youth" became a most important personage, talked about "my pulpit," and "my people," assuming vast consequence, and was, alas, as ignorant as he was high. One of the Members, who appeared to be a pious and upright man, digusted at the pride and foppery of the Teacher, spoke of him in terms not the most respectful. This came to the Teacher's ears, and so rankled in his breast, that he determined to excommunicate the man, and thus satisfy his revenge. But how was this to be done? The simple fact of his having given such a slight cause of offence to the Minister, would by no means accomplish the object, and was scarcely worth mentioning, even to the Minister's most fawning sycophants. No flaw could be discovered in the man's conduct, all was upright and honest. What then could be done? Why the man is a shoemaker, does he ever sell shoes on a Sunday? We will try him. This was the plot—a man was employed, and went on a Sunday morning to the obnoxious Member's house, told him a pitiful tale, saying that he wanted a pair of shoes for one of his children who was entirely without, and could, therefore, neither go to the Sunday School nor to the Meeting-house. He succeeded, the shoemaker was prevailed upon, and sold the shoes, and for so doing was excommunicated in due form! This bright specimen of Dissenting *purity* needs no comment. I was so disgusted at the transaction, that I immediately determined to leave both this set and their *purity* to themselves.

No. III.

I had not attended this Meeting-house a great many weeks, before one of the more respectable Members, immediately after he had received what you call the 'Lord's Supper,' went home, quarrelled with his wife, because she had not waited for him to tea, *swore* at her, and in his rage spurned over the tea-table, and broke the tea-things. And all this was without the Saint's receiving the slightest reprehension. The fact was, the delinquent was a respectable man, and the "Cause" was in any thing but a prosperous state, and consequently neither the dependent Minister, nor any of the Members, durst take any notice of the matter. I shortly after had undeniable evidence of the drunkenness of two other Members of the same Society; and the constable of the place told me, that on going his rounds on a Saturday night, he invariably found another of them at one of the public-houses always drinking, and frequently drunk, and yet, being a first-rate professor, he was thought by some to be one of the most pious Members of the fraternity; and, indeed,

if whine and cant constitute piety, he certainly was so. I have repeatedly heard him, as well as the one who "spurned over the tea-table," engage in prayer at prayer-meetings, and they were truly both to be classed with the "gifted brethren." One of the female Members was so notorious for lying, that whatever she said was seldom if ever believed, except there was other evidence of its truth. The *Clerk*, too, had borrowed a sum of money of one of the Deacons, who himself told me the circumstance, promising faithfully to pay it within a fortnight, but which he never did at all, nor even once mentioned the paying of it. And one of the Deacons also (not the one just mentioned) had been made a bankrupt previously to my knowing anything of him, and was then living respectably, without using any means at all adequate to the decent support of himself and family. It was generally thought, and frequently said, that he was living upon that of which he had defrauded his creditors. No one who had known him for years before his bankruptcy, and who knew that he was then living almost independently, could give any other account of the matter. The Minister, too, was a hypocrite, who gossipped and tattled about five days in the week, retailing slander, and tearing up the private characters of those who would not bow down to the idol set up in his Conventicle—that is himself. He was such a petty tyrant in his own house, that his wife, who had been brought up a Churchwoman, said, with *tears*, that she could "scarcely live with him." She was really an amiable woman, and had not been accustomed to such overbearing conduct and upstart consequential behaviour as that from which she was then suffering, and of which, together with Dissenterism, she was heartily sick. I once said to her, "I presume that you intend your son to be a Dissenting Minister." She immediately replied, with great feeling and emphasis, "No, Sir, never—that he never shall be, if I can possibly prevent it. I have seen enough of that." They were placed in no very enviable circumstances as it regarded their people; he had been their Minister above the regular time—seven years—and was as heartily tired of them as they were of him. Consequently, he was extremely anxious to get a *Call* to some other place with a better salary. He had gone almost all round the country, "preaching himself," and endeavouring to get higher wages, but without success, for nobody would *hire* him—nobody would make him a bid. He was, therefore, obliged to remain with his old masters, and to endeavour (miserable employment) to please their "itching ears"* a little longer, although to them the "tinkling cymbal" had almost lost its charms. This pious

person was enraptured at the appearance of Beverley's scurrilous letter to the Archbishop of York, and used great endeavours to circulate it, not only amongst his own hearers, but also amongst Church people. On the marriage of one of his hearers with a lady who regularly attended the Church, the *disinterested* Teacher addressed a letter to them, and after paying them the usual compliment, invited them *both* to attend his Meeting-house, "that (forsooth) their prayers might not be hindered;" and in order to induce them to go, he offered to give up his own pew, and paid the greatest court to them, knowing that, should he succeed, it would bring "*grist to his mill*." The newly married couple, however, disregarded the *wooing* of the *dependent* Teacher; and as to their prayers not being "hindered," they agreed that this would be best effected by both attending the Church, which they afterwards regularly did, to the mortification of the Trustees, the Minister, and Interest in general. I could still further exemplify the *purity* of this Dissenting brotherhood; but suffice it to say, that I could not for a moment indulge the idea of uniting myself in any way with a Society scarcely a Member of which was of consistently moral conduct. They were, nevertheless, every one of them persons of very—very "*tender consciences*," and would not for the world have complied with a single ceremony of the Church. Truly such persons "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

No. IV.

The Minister himself was one of the sourest and most ill-natured beings under the sun. He used his wife so brutally that the poor creature was sometimes obliged to fly to a neighbour's house for protection from his inhuman conduct, in a state of *all but nudity*. She was then lying on her dying-bed, to which she had been brought by the treatment of her husband—husband! is not the term inapplicable to such a monster! With broken heart, however, and little short of broken bones, she soon after died, and was thus happily released from the thralldom and bitter effects of his "*liberty of conscience*." Notwithstanding all this, and other wicked actions of which he was guilty, he was thought by some to be a very pious man. He was, of course, a "Dissenter *on principle*," and considered a very talented and eminent Minister and "fine preacher." He was a fluent talker about his "*tender conscience*," and about his "*liberty of conscience*." He was also, and is now, a lover of the principles of Democracy, and consequently a hater of the Constitution of the country, and one of the most violent enemies of the Church; he thus, however, confers upon

her the highest honour of which he is capable. This worthy, not long since, delivered in a Meeting-house, in a large market town, the first of an *intended* course of lectures "on the principles of Non-conformity." I had serious thoughts at the time of addressing to him a note, requesting him to let his next lecture be "On the Duties of Husbands to their Wives," from this text, "Husbands love your Wives, and be not bitter against them;" he might then have assigned his reasons for "*Non-conforming*" to those duties. His plea might *consistently* have been "liberty of conscience"—that is, "liberty of acting just as he pleased;" and with it his audience ought *consistently* to have been satisfied. But I must leave this worthy advocate of "liberty of conscience" and Dissenting *purity*, simply adding, that were I to dissect his Church, I could produce numerous other reasons for my having nothing to do with it, and abundant additional proof that Dissent is not quite "purified."

No. V.

The Author of an anonymous letter to a hot-headed Dissenter, who had said, in a speech in opposition to a Church-rate, "THAT IT WOULD BE WELL FOR THE PARISH IF THE CHURCH WERE DOWN," very spiritedly said to him, "Look at the state of your own Conventicles, and tell us by what means your Congregations are held together. Is it not by mere TONGUE RELIGION? You cannot stir a step amongst them but texts of Scripture fly about your ears like hail-shot. Your cobblers are so fond of dabbling in divinity, that they generally venture far beyond their last; your bakers will talk of nothing but purging out the old leaven; your blacksmiths, with a spark of zeal in their throats, are continually hammering out horse-shoes, hob-nails, and Heresy; and your grocers are always retailing Religion. You cannot buy an ounce of pepper but you will have a pound of edification into the bargain. If you go for a farthing candle, you will hear of nothing but the wonderful Gospel *light* of Dissent; and if you ask for an ounce of snuff, the dextrous shopkeeper will present you with a bushel of holy nonsense whilst he is twisting his pack-thread; and as for their *holy* Minister—that *able* man—that faithful labourer in the Lord—Oh, say they, it would do you good to hear him;—how humble—how meek—and how lowly he is; how sweetly do the gracious words flow from his lips; how *powerful* he is in prayer! and you would be *surprised* to hear how he *divides* the Word. In fact, he is the burden of their song; upon his qualifications, talents, *graces*, *gifts*, and *light*, they ring eternal changes: and so they go on, Ministers and people—itching hearers and scratching preachers—'deceiving and being deceived.'—2 Tim. iii. 13."

No. VI.

Mr. James and Mr. Scales have both recommended Towgood's Letters. The Eclectic Review, I believe, blamed Mr. Scales for doing so, and urged as its reasons, that Towgood was an Arian, and that his Book was by no means adapted to promote piety. To this, Mr. Scales replied, in a letter to the Congregational Magazine, that "Towgood's being an Arian, and his Book being BY NO MEANS adapted to promote piety, is an objection very *unfair*, and *illiberal*, and *exceedingly frivolous*." Oh! yes, all this is "*exceedingly frivolous*." If the Book be but "adapted to promote" a "*keen hatred*," and to afford matter for "now and then a little *round abuse of the Church*," its "being by no means adapted to promote piety," and its author "being an Arian," an avowed blasphemer of the eternal Son of God; is a matter with the *pious* Mr. Scales of "*exceedingly frivolous*" consequence. If, indeed, Mr. Scales is not himself an Arian, he may very justly be suspected of being inclined to that poisonous Heresy. I think, I could find it amongst his "Principles of Dissent," not far distant from the sixty-sixth page of his Book.

No. VII.

Let us enquire for a moment or two, into this subject, and see how matters stand in reference to this boasted *purity*. Let me just ask you, if all the proceedings of your Missionary Society were always conducted with the strictest purity? Was there never TWENTY THOUSAND Pounds collected *pretendedly* for Missionary purposes, but *actually* pocketed by a few Dissenting Teachers and others, and never accounted for to the public? Was not a Mr. S——, a Dissenting Teacher, asked to "come into the secret," and told it would be the making of him? But, did he not, like an honest man, refuse to have any thing to do with it? Really, Sir, TWENTY THOUSAND Pounds at one stroke is very fair.* Now, if a few Clergymen had conspired together to rob the public of a tithe of Twenty Thousand Pounds, they would have been justly branded as the greatest rogues and villains in the world; but if it be done by a band of Dissenting Teachers, they are still forsooth very *pious*, *holy*,

* If any person be desirous of having a few specimens of the honesty and uprightness of the Dissenting Managers of the London Missionary Society, in dealing with the public money, he may consult "Unrefuted charges against the Managing Directors of the London Missionary Society, by Andrew Forbes, formerly a Missionary in the East Indies." London, John Stephens, 153, Fleet-Street. A pamphlet containing a pretty expose-

disinterested men, and men of very “*tender consciences*” withal. Allow me, also, to ask how your Academies, those fountains of Dissenting *purity*, are going on? Have none of the *pious* Students ever got drunk, and smoked, and swore, and fought? Were there never any beef-steak and rum and water clubs at any of them? Did none of the Students of Hoxton or Highbury ever scale the walls by night? Did they never bribe any of the servants to let them out and in at all times of the night? Did they never frequent the *theatres*, the *taverns*, nor the *brothels*? Anne accidebat quosdam eorum lue venerea correptos fuisse? Si quidam—quis medicus eos visebat? Anne clamatissimus ille Dr. E—y? Si ille—quantine fuit ejus tabella impensarum et unde soluta? Utrumne ex nummis collectis in eos *pious* adolescentulous Ministros Evangelii reddendos, vel aliunde? Quantumne fuit temporis antequam convalescebant? Did any of them “puff” on the occasion? And if so, who was he? Does the Dissenting Editor of the Congregational Magazine, and Teacher at Claremont Meeting-house, Pentonville, know the person, or any thing about the matter? He can, perhaps, give you some information on the subject? He can, very probably, answer all the above questions very decisively, one way or the other; and if they cannot be met with direct and unequivocal negatives, what are we to think of Dissenting purity? And of those holy youths recommended to the work of your pretended Ministry too, for their fervent piety and ardent zeal for the glory of God? Such impudent hypocrites, too, have the barefaced wickedness to pretend, that they are specially called by the Holy and ever blessed Spirit, to preach the Gospel of Christ!! Who is not shocked at such daring presumption, profaneness, and downright wickedness? Yet, these are your men of *Christian* experience—these are your holy and heavenly souls, sent forth from these sinks of iniquity to be the Teachers of Congregations professing Christianity, in greater purity forsooth than their neighbours!! Talk of Oxford and Cambridge, I have never seen either of them, but when we consider on one hand, that their Graduates are most of them the sons of the nobility and gentry just released from the restraints of their Parents and Tutors, with plenty of money, and without any particular pretensions to piety; and, that, not above one-third of them are ever intended for the Church; and on the other hand, that all the Students at the Dissenting Academies pretended to have had an especial Call from the Holy Ghost to their Ministry, and to be very pious, holy, and devoted young men, sent there, indeed, on account of their extraordinary piety and virtue, I hesitate not to say, that as bad as Oxford and Cambridge may be, Dissenting Academies are ten times worse, uniting with their immorality

the grossest hypocrisy. Besides, the means by which many enter these Dissenting hotbeds of vice, vanity, pride, and foppery, are not *extremely* pure. The only enquiry made respecting one young man, whom his Minister was determined to send through his own influence, in spite of the opposition of his Church Members, who quarrelled famously about the matter, was simply, "Is he likely to become ultimately an *intelligent intelligible* speaker?" Another young man, when examined on his entrance, was asked, "What can you do?" He very gravely replied, "I can play on the violin."!!! The Examiner then said, "I mean, what books have you read?" To this, he doltishly answered, "Well—I have read Pilgrim's Progress."!!! Nevertheless, this "intelligent intelligible" fiddling pilgrim was admitted, and simply because of the influence of an uncle, who was one of the Committee, and who probably thought as the late Dissenting Thomas Wilson, Esq. once said, on a similar occasion, that should his request be denied, "he would shake his purse at them"—a most powerful argument no doubt. A Mr. S——y, also a Dissenting Teacher, desirous of bringing his eldest son, about fourteen, up to his own trade, and taking it for granted, that he could get "*the Call*" for him whenever he pleased, sent him entirely against his own will to a Dissenting Academy. The boy, however, said, that "he would be D——d, if he would be subject to any restraint," and he kept his word, for with some of his hopeful and *pious* companions, he used to spend some of his nights in debauchery and dissipation, not returning sometimes till six o'clock in the morning. Allow me, also, to ask you, where Mr. C., once a Dissenting Teacher of Walworth, now is, and whether he or some other of your self-dubbed Reverends never turned Harlequin, and amongst other manœuvres, pretended to jump into a quart pot? And where is Mr. Mc. K., who was at one time the Teacher of a Congregation in the West-Riding of Yorkshire, not far from two Dissenting Academies? You are aware, that he kicked up a quarrel with his people, which terminated in a law-suit, to his great disappointment. And that, in consequence of this, the worthy Teacher would not return home, but sent to his wife, ordering her to sell off all their goods and chattels, and to meet him at a certain place, which was accordingly done. He immediately demanded all the money from his wife, and set sail for Van Dieman's Land, leaving her with, I believe, two children behind him, almost, if not quite penniless to the wide world. I may, also, mention another of your pious Brotherhood, who was considered a most eloquent preacher, and who, besides, the pleasure of wearing a gown, was receiving three hundred pounds a year, with a capital residence; but having "a Call" to a Meeting-house in London, with five hundred

pounds a year, he immediately obeyed it, took leave of his dear—dear people, telling them the Lord had called him to labour in another part of his Vineyard, and in spite of many solicitations and tears started for Town. How many “Calls” might this worthy have had from three hundred a-year to one hundred before he would have heard them? He had not, however, been long in London before he was discovered to be a drunkard, in consequence of this he hung himself, but whether he designed it or not, he did not kill himself, and is yet in the land of the living. And I perceive he has just emerged from the obscurity in which shame has compelled him ever since to remain, but instead of coming forth in the shape of a Teacher of Spiritual Democracy, he has assumed that of a Teacher of Political Democracy, both which offices are certainly very nearly allied. This pious Divine has metamorphosed himself into the Editor of one of the most Radical of all the Radical Newspapers that infest the country in these our degenerate “TIMES.”

I could furnish you with several other illustrations of Dissenting Purity, but I will not pursue the unpleasant subject any further, hoping that I have gone far enough to shew you how little cause you have to find fault with the Clergy.

NO. VIII.

This Doctor Bennett, they say, is a very spruce, affected, and pompous gentleman, and was some time ago a Teacher of Schism and Democracy at a Dissenting Academy at Rotherham, whence he got a “Call” to London. And as this “Call” called him to a larger salary, he being, of course, a very *disinterested* man, immediately heard it *even* from London, and “accepted it.” What the Doctor assigned as his motives for leaving his ‘dear people’ at Rotherham, I know not; but undoubtedly there was the usual cant of a “desire to be employed in a greater sphere of usefulness” of “trust, that the Lord had ‘called him’ to labour in another part of his vineyard,” and other such “good words and fair speeches,” to ‘deceive the hearts of the simple.’ It has often been a matter of surprise to me, that people should be so easily gulled and cheated by these “deceivers,” for their pretences are so extremely flimsy, that it might be supposed any person would immediately see through them. In this instance the Doctor had a “Call” to go to London, and, of course, another from his people at Rotherham, to stay with them. Now, the souls of the people at Rotherham were of equal value to those at London, and as there were in London already several Ministers whom the Doctor would ac-

knowledge to be quite as holy, pious, and devoted as himself, the people at Rotherham were likely to be in much greater danger for want of his *disinterested* services, than those in London. And besides, if this *disinterested* Doctor felt desirous of making himself more useful in "the Cause," why did he not go to some one of the very numerous places which are entirely destitute of what he calls the Gospel, he would then have had abundant opportunity for the display of his holy zeal and devotedness? The Holy and Blessed Spirit called St. Paul to preach amongst the Heathen, and those destitute of the Gospel, without the prospect of a higher salary, or of any salary at all, and the blessed Apostle cheerfully obeyed. But according to *the cant* of this *disinterested* Doctor, and his *disinterested* coadjutors, the Holy Spirit is far more favourable to them, always calling them to higher salaries. It certainly seems rather remarkable, that they should *never* be called to less salaries, at least if they be, they always take care never to hear, for I never knew one in my life to leave a greater for a less salary. There are, generally, two "*Calls*," one richer than the other, as in the case of Doctor Bennett; he had a five hundred pound "*Call*" from London, and a three hundred pound "*Call*" at Rotherham, the one considerably louder than the other, and as "*weak*" Calls and "*weak consciences*" are so widely different, it is not very difficult to divine which the Doctor heard, the weakest always goes to the wall, and so it was with the Rotherham "*Call*." The Doctor listened to the five hundred pound "*Call*," satisfied his "tender conscience" that he heard it very distinctly; and soon after went to London, leaving the good easy folks at Rotherham perfectly satisfied, no doubt, as to the *disinterestedness* of his motives and movement. Thus do such men, "speaking lies in hypocrisy," "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly."

The engineer of one of the Yorkshire manufactories for making Dissenting Preachers, to supply the country shops in the neighbourhood, attempted a few years ago, by craft, and even *bribery*, to root a respected old Minister out of his Meeting-house, in order to foist in a lad, whom he had been manufacturing into a "pulpit fop," but he could not succeed by direct and honest means. He, therefore, knowing that if he could not find a market for his traffic, that part of his trade must fail, in connexion with some of his comrades, hired the theatre, and opened a shop in opposition to the white-headed old man, who had been the Teacher at the place nearly, if not quite, thirty years; and thus the *pious* engineer, by sowing the seeds of division and discord amongst the old man's hearers, accomplished his holy purposes. The rent of the theatre went, of course, to the support of the "theatrical

interest," which caused some of the "Brethren" to whisper that it was doing evil that good might come. Had Dr. Bennett, the pious and *loyal* Dr. Bennett, any hand in this dirty piece of business? Does he recollect whether Barnsley, in the neighbourhood of *Rotherham*, is the town where this accomplished trick was transacted? This Mr. Bennett, D.D. is a trans-atlantic Doctor, and the worthy coadjutor of Mr. Cox, L.L.D. in the Secretaryship of the infamous Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society. And they are truly a "*par nobile (mobile?) fratrum.*"

No. IX.

* [Page 43. "*How many thousands*" *μυριαδῆς* Acts xxi. 20.] I added what is here said in reference to this text, and the argument founded upon it, at the request of a friend. Not that I did not consider the argument legitimate and good, for of this I have not a doubt; but because as there were strangers at Jerusalem at that time, it is not possible to say whether any of them were or were not included in the number signified by "*how many thousands,*" or tens of thousands, and because I considered my point fully established without it, and my arguments fairly unanswerable.

REAL POSITION OF DISSENT.

The following, from "the *Standard*," contains much useful information concerning the relative numbers of Churchmen and Dissenters:—

"Our contemporary (*The Morning Chronicle*) asserted that, in the manufacturing districts, the proportion of Dissenters to Churchmen was four, or at least three to one; and that we replied that the proportion of Dissenters to Churchmen in the district alluded to was not even a proportion of equality, the Churchmen being a majority. It is one of the difficulties against which we have to struggle, that many of the best friends of the Religious and Political Institutions of England have their understandings so completely sophisticated by the everlasting reiteration of falsehood from the ranks of the enemy, that they are unable, almost unwilling, to believe the truth, except upon the very strongest, indeed, upon irresistible evidence. Such evidence, however, we are happily this day able to offer. It will not be denied, that the County of Lancaster constitutes the most exclusively manufacturing district in the kingdom; if, therefore, we are able to prove, upon indisputable testimony, that the proportion of Dissenters to Churchmen in Lancashire is nothing like equal, we presume that we shall be allowed to have redeemed our pledge. We have before us a return, ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, on the 8th of July, 1830. This return is entitled as follows:—"Churches and Chapels—Return of the Number of Parish Churches and Chapels, and Chapels of Ease, of the Church of England, and of the Number of Places of Worship, not of the Church of England, so far as regards the County of

Lancaster."—The return, we must observe, is incomplete as regards locality—no information having been obtained from parts of the Hundreds of Lonsdale, Salford, and West Derby, severally; the population of these parts, according to the tables of 1831 (the tables used throughout,) amounting to 98,889. The great manufacturing towns, however, of Manchester, Oldham, Bolton, Salford, Preston, and the great commercial town of Liverpool, are all included in the district from which complete information has been obtained. We therefore, are entitled to reject the unreported district, and its 98,889 from calculation on both sides; the reported portion of the county, and its population of 953,978, are to form the subject of our inquiry. The return, as respects Dissenters, specifies the number of Places of Worship of the several classes of Non-conforming Religionists, and the number of each Sect attached to each Place of Worship, in the following order:—

BAPTISTS.—Chapels, 60; Members of Sect, 9,248.

CALVINISTS.—Chapels, 23; Members of Sect, 7,569.

ROMAN CATHOLICS.—Chapels, 83; Members of Sect, 144,244.

INDEPENDENTS.—Chapels, 81; Members of Sect, 24,299.

METHODISTS.—Chapels, 264; Members of Sect, 55,083.

PRESBYTERIANS.—Chapels, 13; Members of Sect, 3,954.

QUAKERS.—Chapels, 20; Members of Sect, 1,969.

UNITARIANS.—Chapels, 28; Members of Sect, 5,099.

ALL OTHER NON-CONFORMING RELIGIONISTS, INCLUDING MORAVIANS, SWEDENBORGHIIANS, BIBLE CHRISTIANS, JOHANNITES, JEWS, &c.—Chapels, 18; Members of Sects, 3,946.—Total Chapels, 590; Members of Sects, 255,411. This, be it remembered, is the return of the Dissenters themselves, who, if they have had any interest in falsifying it, have certainly been interested in falsifying it on the side of excess. This is the proportion of Non-conforming Religionists in the most exclusively manufacturing district in England—255,411 out of a population of 953,978, nearer one-fourth than one-third of the whole.—The *Morning Chronicle* may deny the claim of the Church to some of the remaining 700,000, to use round numbers; but it cannot be pretended that two-thirds of this number consist of persons absolutely without any religion; and if even our Contemporary contends for 400,000 Atheists in Lancashire, that is, for almost half the population of the county, as "living without God in the world," still the Churchmen will be found to exceed the Dissenters in a very great proportion. We might here close our reply; but this return is fraught with much valuable information, no part of which we can permit to

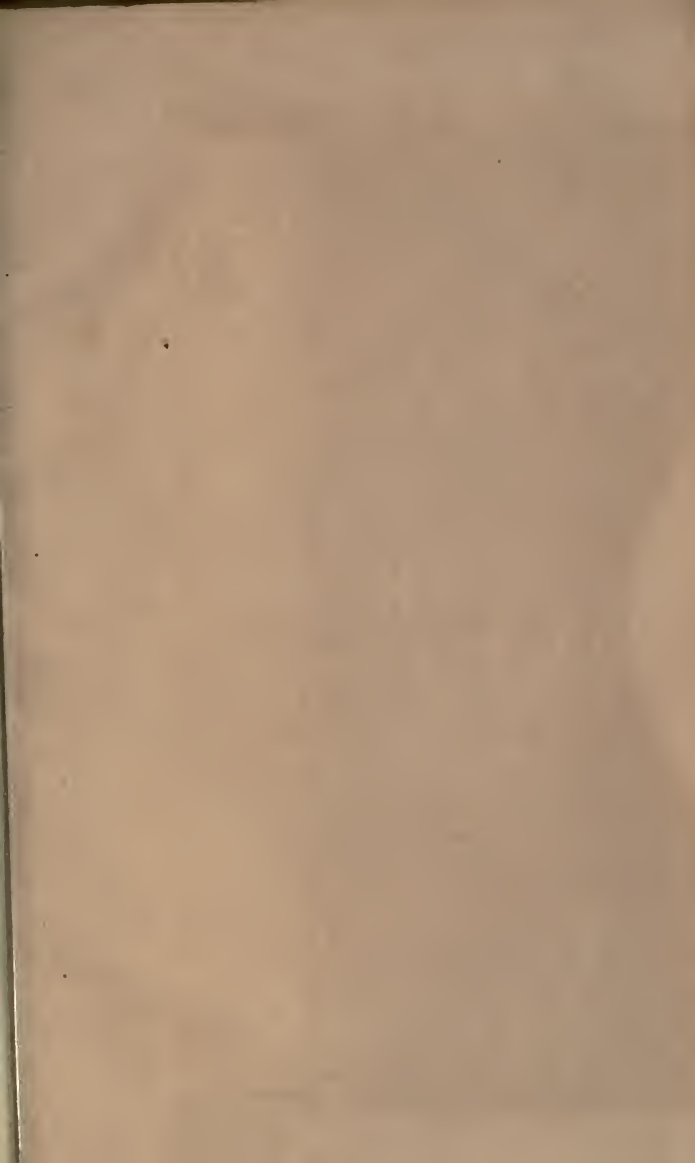
be lost. The number of Roman Catholics, in proportion to the aggregate of Non-conformists, will surprise most of our readers unacquainted with the state of Lancashire. In Liverpool, Manchester, and all the other great towns of that county, however, nearly the whole of the out-door labour is executed by Irish emigrants. Mr. Cobbett was so struck with this, that he gave to Liverpool the name of "Little Dublin." It is known, however, to all, that this great proportion of Irish does not prevail in the other parts of the kingdom. In settling, therefore, the ratio between Churchmen and Dissenters for the kingdom, we must exclude the Roman Catholics on both sides. Rejecting this class of Religionists from the Lancashire return, how will the account stand!—

| | |
|--|---------|
| Population of the reported district..... | 953,970 |
| Deduct Roman Catholics | 144,244 |
| <hr/> | |
| Protestants of all Denominations | 809,726 |
| Deduct Protestant Dissenters | 111,167 |
| <hr/> | |
| Protestants who are not Dissenters | 698,559 |

The Protestant Dissenters in Lancashire, then—in Lancashire the most extensively manufacturing county in the kingdom—are *not one* in six of the whole Protestant population. Figures cannot lie, and there is the calculation. But we have more yet to deduct from the political Dissenting faction—we have to reduce the number of that faction by the whole body of Methodists—a body which is not hostile to the Church. The return tells us that the Methodists make up 55,083 of the aggregate of Non-conformists; as nearly as may be, one-half of the whole amount of Protestant Dissenters in the return. The whole amount of the anti-Church Dissenting faction in the Lancashire return is, therefore, but 56,804, that is, in the proportion of one-twelfth of the whole Protestant population reported. What will the *Morning Chronicle* say to this? We shall not be silenced by any exclamations of "ridiculous," "absurd," "contrary to common sense," "opposed to every man's experience," &c. &c. Such phrases as "ridiculous," "absurd," &c. mean just nothing; and "common sense" and "experience" will, upon a little reflection, satisfy every one that twelve men, active and ambitious, organized and well compacted, and pursuing that one object, can easily, as far as hearing and report are concerned, impose themselves for a majority of 144, provided they are so far unscrupulous as to attempt the fraud, and the remaining 132 so honest and so listless

as neither to imitate nor resist it. But we have not yet done with our return. It will be remembered that we stated 250, or thereabout, as a fair average for the Congregation of each Protestant Dissenting Chapel. Let us apply the information of the return to this point. The whole number of Chapels reported is 590; from this we are to deduct 83 Roman Catholic Chapels, leaving a balance of 507 Chapels to accommodate 111,167 Protestant Dissenters. Now 111,167, divided by 507, give a quotient of 219,—a great deal less than 250. Again we ask, what will the *Morning Chronicle* say to this? So far from our average being “ridiculously small,” it is chargeable with gross excess—an excess of 16 or 17 per cent. above the truth, applying the average collected from the reports of the most exclusively manufacturing county in the kingdom. Applying the average to the 8,000 Chapels stated, we find the whole number of Protestant Dissenters in the kingdom, very improperly including the Methodists, to amount to but 1,752,000, or, curiously and instructively enough, not materially differing from the proportion of one-sixth of the whole Protestant population, the very ratio at which we have arrived by a totally different process of calculation.—The *Morning Chronicle* yesterday, upon the authority of the *Congregational Magazine*, rated the average Congregation of the Established Churches at 400, as far as London is concerned—about one-fourth of the truth,—but no matter. Admit, for example, that the Westminster Churches average no higher Congregation than 400; the Westminster Meeting-houses cannot pretend to a higher average than the Meeting-houses of Manchester, Liverpool, Salford, Bolton, Oldham, &c. viz. 219. There are 30 Churches in Westminster, and 17 Meeting-houses: 30 multiplied by 400 give us 12,000—17 multiplied by 219 give us 3,723—this, upon the statement of the Dissenters themselves, being the proportion in Westminster. But we need scarcely repeat, that 400 is nothing like the half of the average attendance in the Westminster Churches; the proportion of Churchmen to Dissenters, in Westminster, would, we firmly believe, be truly stated at 10 to 1. We have made these calculations with the utmost care, with the most vigilant jealousy, and we confess that the result has both surprised and gratified us; we are consequently prepared to expect that it will astonish as well as delight very many of our readers, particularly such of them as happen to live in peculiarly Dissenting neighbourhoods. But, *littera scripta manet*, the return remains in the records of Parliament—the return has been furnished by Dissenters themselves—the evidence is incontestible. It may be imprudent to underrate the force of an opponent; but even that

noble imprudence, has often inspired gallant enterprises and led to glorious triumphs—the antagonist fault, the cowardice always underrating our own resources and the resources of our friends, and exaggerating the power of our enemies, has no such redeeming exceptions; it never yet led to any thing but disgrace and ruin irretrievable. It is against this unhappy fault, by which the Church party has suffered so much, by which it has been brought into its present danger, that we warn our countrymen.



RTheol

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Author Gathercole, M.A.

Title Letters to a dissenting minister. Ed.4.

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